

Making a living in a slum settlement: The relative influence of norms, cognition and group practices on slum dwellers' choices related to earning a living

The case of Thapathali slum settlement in the metropolitan area of
Kathmandu, Nepal

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I, Raphaëlle Bisiaux, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Bisiaux', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Abstract

This doctoral thesis explores slum dwellers' decisions regarding their ways of making a living. The different aspects of earning one's life in a poverty situation have been mostly studied from the perspective of livelihood assets, the circulation of information about opportunities, the management of skills and relationships, and the affirmation of personal significance in carrying out one's livelihood strategy. By contrast, this research investigates the *decisions* behind making a living, by looking at the relative influence of 1) the norms shaping the slum dwellers' environment, 2) slum dwellers' individual intentions, 3) slum dwellers' motivation to comply with others' behaviours, and 4) the narratives slum dwellers build around the rationality of their choices.

In an attempt to address the knowledge gap concerning the interactions between decision-making and poverty, the research documents and analyses the interplay of individual and social factors affecting decision-making processes in the Thapathali slum settlement of Kathmandu, Nepal. The research shows that through their discourse, slum dwellers relay normative beliefs, that is, beliefs which are influenced by norms or definitions of what is acceptable. It is found that these normative beliefs have a *partially* prescriptive role in determining how slum dwellers make decisions. Most unexpectedly, while slum dwellers' interpretations of norms produce normative beliefs that are difficult to revise such as *valuation neglect* – the dispositions of slum dwellers to strive for further opportunities being limited by the collective interpretation of their constrained situation –, the research demonstrates that particular norms such as religious and caste-related norms create a *room for manoeuvre* as slum dwellers interpret these norms while serving their individual interests, therefore shifting the boundaries of the collectively accepted norms. Driven by one's will to 'opt out' from caste discrimination, some slum dwellers instrumentalise their religious affiliation and convert to Christianity to overcome discrimination and access further benefits within the community, while others make use of their caste-related skills to enhance their array of opportunities.

The research concludes that decisions related to making a living in situations of poverty are primarily characterised by the *volatility* of the normative beliefs behind these decisions: slum dwellers recurrently interpret and re-interpret norms in an attempt to best align their behaviours with their individual intentions and the collective reasons given for certain behaviours within the community. As such, it is the study of the *production* of normative beliefs that best achieves the unpacking of decision processes and decision practices related to making a living in the Thapathali slum settlement.

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« Puis, à mesure que les nerfs se détendent et que le soleil descend, vous vient cette fatigue comblée, cette envie d'adorer, d'engager son sort, qui vous prend tout d'un coup et libère, à une profondeur que d'ordinaire on néglige, un surcroît de vie violente qu'on ne sait comment employer. S'il était encore question de remuer un membre, on danserait. »

Nicolas Bouvier (1963)

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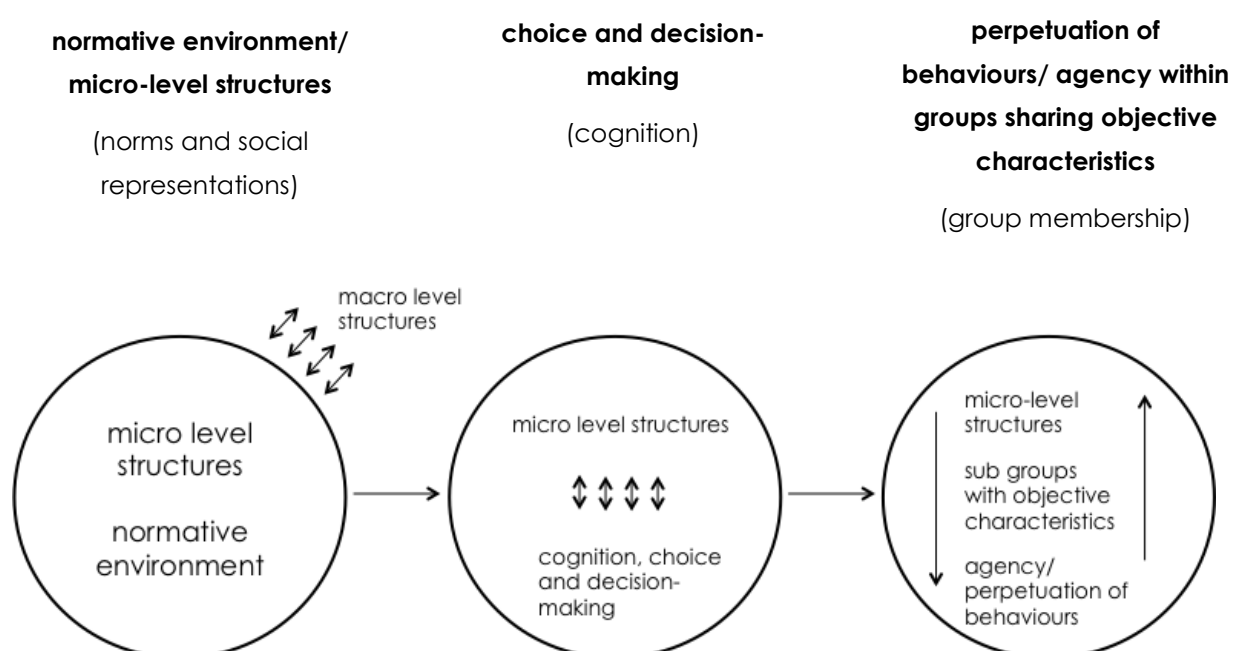
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Introduction

In contemporary usage, social science research refers to the work of a range of academics and practitioners across disciplines as diverse as sociology, economics, anthropology or social work. Social scientists use, employ, review, discuss and debate a wide range of theories, approaches, models and methods shared among these academic disciplines – with the primary objective of analysing social phenomena. One may argue that the range of behaviours framing the realm of social reality is boundless, and that the task social scientists set for themselves is idealistic. Social phenomena are inclusive of all human behaviours which influence or are influenced by organisms sufficiently alive/ sociable to respond to one another. Social phenomena encompass the nature of social life, the study of groups and interactions between groups, environmental and ecological studies, and more recently the consciousness of interactions and the agency of individuals within social groups.

Nonetheless the role of the social scientist as discussed in this research project goes beyond the basics of social observation and the descriptive aspects of social science research. The social scientist here is willing to question the *meanings* of social phenomena from the perspective of the socially-embedded agent as a living organism subjected to the influence of the normative environment (norms) influenced by his/her own understanding of rational choice and decision-making (cognition) and following his/her interpretation of 'normated' practices within the social group s/he belongs to (group membership). I argue as part of this research that the interplay of individual and social factors shaping and affecting the social realm requires a framework for the social scientist to fully identify his/her variables of interest, the approach s/he adopts to grasp social realities and the personal points of view s/he is required to manage in order to limit his/her interpretations as a social subject with the social research question under scrutiny.



The basic tools (tools being understood here as the set of instruments – theories, approaches, models, research instruments – living in the social researcher's toolbox) of social observation may fall short in providing an appropriate framework to disentangle the factors at play when decision-making occurs for an agent or a group of individuals. Agents make decisions on numerous aspects of their lives, on an everyday basis, and have different capacities and constraints to account for when aligning their decisions with the goals and objectives they set for themselves. Agents may also take unconscious decisions; they stir their actions spontaneously in one way or another under the influence of their decision environment. They may follow volitional decision-making processes that are based upon their perception of social realities and create an amended reality narrative of their own in order to align their meanings of the decision¹ with the outcomes of their decision. Social scientists' tools are poor equipment to grasp the complexities of such a social phenomenon as decision-making pathways. Tools are plenty, tools are rigorous and tools serve different purposes that would allow a thorough mapping of social realities if one were to apply each of them, with their specific function, to the realm of social phenomena occurring in our social worlds. However I found that choices have to be made as tools do not always complement one another but often contradict the interpretation of social phenomena depending on the unit of study or the approach taken. An objective approach to decision-making pathways could be linear and weigh the different means in relation to the objectives set up to be achieved. A subjective approach may compare between the different ways in which agents see or interpret social reality and how subjectivity has an effect on their decision-making pathways. According to Bryman (2008),

objectivism

"social phenomena confront us as external facts that are beyond our reach or influence"
(Bryman 2008: 19)

subjectivism

"social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors"
(Bryman 2008: 19)

The socially-constructed meanings of decisions can be questioned at the level of the social group, as part of a holistic understanding of the construction of social meanings. They may alternatively be questioned at the level of the agent, when social scientists conceptualise the individual as an agent with thoughts and actions that make up the social phenomena of interest (methodological individualism). Methodological *localism* on the other hand provides a third way for our understanding of the socially-constructed meanings of decisions by arguing that the constitutive particle of the social world is the socially-embedded actor and his/her recurring interactions with other social actors and social groups – and this approach is of interest to the social scientist attempting to solve the pitfalls of holism and individualistic approaches.

¹ The 'meanings' of decisions may differ from one individual to another as they *a posteriori* reflect on their choices. This phenomenon can be referred to as the 'rationalisation' of a decision.

holism	methodological individualism	methodological localism
society is a unified collective with a nature of its own that cannot be reduced to the sum of individuals' contributions	social phenomena can only be understood by examining how they result from the motivations and actions of individual agents	social structures are only possible insofar as they are embodied in the actions and states of socially constructed individuals; they live, act, and develop within a set of local social relationships, institutions, norms, and rules

Tools designed to apprehend social phenomena appear less reconcilable as they are anchored in different social academic disciplines. If the social scientist aims at unpacking the differentiated influences of an agent's cognition and his/her decision environment, a problem emerges as to which tools from sociology or psychology to apply to the question to be studied. Ajzen (1991) proposes the Theory of Reasoned Action to assess the predictive power of one's subjective beliefs and attitudes towards others' behaviours in predicting the occurrence of reasoned actions. Belief systems are identified as organisational structures with a degree of autonomy and constitute the micro-level social structures within which each agent operates. Cognitivists bring the additional dimension of rationality in choice-making, as agents tend to follow a reasoning process that can be mapped following similar stages from one agent to another. On the other hand sociologists such as Bourdieu (1972) attempted to explain social phenomena from the dual perspective of the individual (psychology and agency of individual actions) and the social group (structuralist approach to normative systems). Practice theory incorporates a dynamic and transformative component to the psychological understanding of reasoned actions, in that it advocates the scrutiny of the diverse motives and intentions of agents and how these make and transform the social worlds in which they live.

As such one may argue Bourdieu's and Ajzen's approaches to decision-making pathways are not so different from one another and could potentially be reconciled in spite of their different disciplinary anchors. In support of my intention to unravel the meanings and underlying forces at work in decision-making pathways, and following my pre-conception of what constitutes a decision and how decision-takers are likely to act, I formulate as an assumption that both psychology and sociology offer reconcilable tools for the social scientist to address the cross-cutting topic of decision-making. While psychology and cognition are not the primary focus of this research, they are an inevitable component to the sociological approach to decision-making strategies, and my assumption here is that the pathway to a comprehensive understanding of choice and decision lies in the unification of these two disciplines, psychology and sociology, using concepts and constructs belonging to the sphere of behavioural sciences – the study of empirical data and recurrent patterns in decision processes and strategies of humans abstracted from an environment where stimuli are controlled for – such as heuristics, framing effects, feedback loops and so on.

psychology	sociology	social psychology	behavioural sciences
involves the scientific study of mental functions and behaviours	study of social behaviour, its origins, development, organisation, and institutions	area of sociology that focuses on social actions and on interrelations of personality, values, and mind with social structure and culture	behavioural sciences abstract empirical data to investigate the decision processes and strategies within and between organisms in a social system

Consequently, this research has been an exploratory journey into the circumvolutions and dynamic forces at play in decision-making pathways and the ways in which the social scientists' tools are of help to deepen one's understanding of a cross-cutting topic with few agreed-upon definitions and framework for study. A key difficulty in this endeavour has been to discuss, question and argue in favour of an approach so comprehensive, yet tailored to the research topic. Within this objective, the reconciliation between several tools (theories, approaches, models, research instruments, etc.) has not been an easy task although the resulting conceptual framework presented in this doctoral thesis may be of interest for future research as it was found that little existing research focused on the concepts analysed here and certainly not in the ways the different components of the conceptual framework have been assembled for the purpose of this research. Applications of the conceptual framework presented in this doctoral thesis would be specifically adapted to case study research in the field of international development, both for academic researchers and development practitioners who seek to use practical tools anchored in a coherent theoretical framework².

To understand people's main motivational drivers, a fundamental assumption here has been to take for granted that agents are driven by individual motivations and formulate decisions as actors involved with moving forward their personal agenda and intimate goals – 'personal' and 'intimate' understood here as 'individual' goals that are yet potentially influenced by cultural and social factors embedded in upbringing, migration patterns or interactions with others. As such the agent is the primary unit of analysis, but not solely, as the household and the social group(s) concomitantly influence a number of decisional aspects: the 'ways in which', the 'reasons why' and the 'capacity' of agents to make decisions. Another fundamental reason for delving into the subject of decision-making is – in the case of this specific piece of research – strongly linked to the personal interests of the social scientist to disentangle the forces at play as one decides between different alternatives. It follows from this assumption that the decisions, behaviours and actions considered as part of this research are *volitional* decisions, behaviours and actions, in order for 'built' meanings (as opposed to causes only) to exist (and be studied) behind these decisions.

² These considerations are further discussed in the conclusion of the doctoral thesis.

volitional action

purposive striving; result of a cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action

non-volitional action

performed or occurring as a result of an impulse or inclination and without premeditation; reaction

The investigation of *meanings* subsequently implies the adoption of a cultural relativist position by the social scientist, following Boas's idea that "*civilisation is not something absolute, but (...) is relative, and (...) our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilisation goes*" (Boas 1887: 62). Implications are numerous for the researcher, as to adopt cultural relativism requires a deconstruction of one's preconceptions, the identification of preconceptions in a different cultural context – here the context of study – and the acceptance to place oneself as an ethno-centred agent in a culture that differs from one's original understanding of social realities³. The acknowledgment of the co-existence of different social worlds is a preliminary step for the social researcher in order to form a mind-set that is tolerant of the co-existence of different social worlds, and the potential co-existence of different social worlds *within* the context of study.

On the one hand the choice of having a single case study⁴ as part of this research is a deliberate choice that allows the social scientist to focus on a specific social group to understand the decision pathways of agents within a delimited sphere of norms and practices – referred to in this research as the 'decision environment'. On the other hand the 'monograph' format – a piece of original research presenting a single aspect of a subject – does not read as such in the case of this thesis, as ethno-centrism is expected from the researcher only as far as the study of the social group as a whole is concerned. The study of different sub-groups within the social group and their interplay requires a dose of cultural relativism to enable a distanced appropriation of the sub-components of the social group under investigation. As a result, the choice of a single case study for the research is in line with the requirements of the topic under consideration – that is, the study of a social phenomenon from the three-fold perspective of (1) the social group as a whole, (2) each sub-group constituting the social group and (3) the comparative study of the different sub-groups. Issues of generalizability occur as the study of sub-groups and findings emerging from the understanding of forces at play are specific to one case study and do not draw upon the comparison of several cases. It follows, however, – from the choice of a single case study – that the researcher is able to delve into the variations between different sub-groups; and that the scalability of results does not entirely rely on comparative studies with other case studies but finds its ground in the findings emerging from the micro-level groups embedded in the wider social group under consideration.

This research is not original solely to the extent to which it questions the embeddedness of sociological and psychological approaches to decision-making, but also because it places the empirical examination of such a conceptual framework in the context of a singular slum settlement in a fast urbanising country – Nepal. The pathway towards becoming an urbanised

³ I discuss the potential implications of researcher's bias in Chapter 3.

⁴ A more detailed discussion about the choice of the case study can be found in Chapter 3.

economy has been an emerging feature of the Nepalese economy over the past two decades, and came as an abrupt transformative process as the Kathmandu Valley became one of the fastest-growing metropolitan regions in South Asia (World Bank 2013). Different types of sub-standard settlements have been established as a result of urbanisation patterns over the last decades in Kathmandu City. Among these, squatter settlements represent a large share of the settlements in which low income populations pursue a living. The atypicality of Thapathali – bearing in mind that any sub-standard settlement is original in its own ways – lies in the recentness of its establishment, seven years ago, following a demonstration in the streets of Kathmandu which ended with a march over the uninhabited Thapathali land where demonstrators settled overnight. In addition to being a recent settlement, the Thapathali area did not have further settlers after the initial march over its land as the community, under threats of eviction and aiming at preserving large plots of land around their brick houses, chose not to welcome new comers. In May 2012, six years after the initial establishment of the settlement, the community was forcibly evicted by the government with the help of bulldozers which left the brick houses destroyed and their inhabitants homeless. Nonetheless, in the absence of housing alternatives, inhabitants stayed on the land and rebuilt temporary small shacks with the use of plastic materials and cardboard. As such, the story of the Thapathali settlement makes its community an interesting research case as the spontaneity of the settling ensured the foundation of a community with individuals from various origins and backgrounds, followed by the establishment of communal micro-level structures within a closed community with a steady and isolated population, albeit in the centre of the city. The eviction events developed into a non-eviction or failed eviction whereby inhabitants stayed on the evicted land and started to revive the community (mostly its housing structures) from scratch. As a result micro-level structures have evolved and present a fascinating case study for the researcher who could approach the study of normative systems and practices from a specific and unique angle – socially-constructed norms produced within a specific timeframe, for a settlement that was uncharacteristically stable in terms of composition and membership⁵.

Subsequently, building upon a wealth of data and contextual observations from the field research period, the research objectives were revised as the researcher identified gaps in the conceptual framework applied to such a context of study⁶. To a significant extent the research was driven by the gathering of information and followed an iterative approach to refining research objectives by incorporating further behavioural concepts to explore agents' positioning towards decision-making. Nonetheless the primary objective of **understanding the decision-making patterns of actors subjected to the influence of the normative environment (norms and social representations), the influence of their own understanding of rational choice and decision-making (cognition) and the influence of their interpretation of 'normated' practices within the**

⁵ It can be argued that the atypicality of the case study is remarkably unique and that the study of such a community entails limitations in terms of the generalisation of findings. Nonetheless, as explained in Chapter 3, the atypicality of the case study is also its main strength, in the sense that the succession of events circumstantially created a situation that allows the study of socially-constructed norms produced within a specific timeframe, for a settlement that was uncharacteristically stable in terms of composition and membership.

⁶ While the decision to opt for the Thapathali case study was driven by a range of considerations (as explained further in Chapter 3), the researcher had to address the particularities of the context of study after the decision was made to focus on the Thapathali settlement area. In particular, the literature review conducted as a preparation to fieldwork had to be expanded and research tools were revised accordingly.

social group they belong to (group membership) stands as the overarching thread knitting this doctoral thesis together. Predominantly the context of study – the Thapathali slum settlement – drove the establishment of the research hypothesis, that is, decision-making pathways in situations of poverty differ in some ways from other decision-making pathways, as agents with limited resources operate ‘at the margins’⁷.

The implications of testing the research hypothesis using an interdisciplinary approach to decision-making are numerous, and involve the production of an original conceptual framework and the unravelling of forces at play in normative systems and practices at the level of a social group and its sub-components. As such this doctoral thesis may be read as a contribution to research practices when it comes to understanding decision-making pathways and presents a tentative set of tools to achieve this objective. Finally the deductive aspect of the research allowed a comprehensive normative mapping of the case study and the possibility to predict behaviours within the framework of reference – which, in the case of Thapathali settlement, provides a range of insights for policy-makers to address situations of poverty and adapt policy interventions to account for actors’ behaviours⁸.

Following these introductory remarks, the doctoral thesis reads as follows. Chapter 1 focuses on the theoretical approach to decision-making and the decision environment, and presents the fundamental assumptions and theoretical frameworks in which the research finds its grounds. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of concepts such as poverty, making a living and decisions in order to delimit the conceptual framework used for this research by adding the perspective of poverty into the investigation of ways in which agents make decisions. Chapter 3 presents the research objectives and discusses the methodology and research tools used to explore decision-making pathways. Chapter 4 provides a detailed presentation of the case study and the macro-level urban dynamics at play in Kathmandu City. Chapter 5 presents findings relating to the decision environment and the micro-level structures that shape the Thapathali social group, in relation to the macro-level dynamics presented in the previous chapter. Chapter 6 focuses on the decisions made by agents relating to making a living, the cognitive steps followed and the influence of the normative environment on decision-making pathways. It also discusses findings from the mapping of the objective characteristics of sub-social groups and the mechanisms through which norms, beliefs and patterns of decision-making perpetuate within these sub-groups. Concluding remarks on implications end the research. References and annexes can be found at the end of the document.

⁷ The research hypothesis is more specifically discussed in Chapter 2, as part of the literature review about poverty and decision-making. A definition of ‘*operating at the margins*’ is given.

⁸ These considerations are further explored in the conclusion of the doctoral thesis.

1. Theoretical approach to decision-making and the decision environment

This study of decision-making processes faced an early decision of its own about which existing theories and approaches to investigate in relation to the subject matter. Among those considered especially useful, decision analysis exposes complex mechanisms through the lens of basic logics, without engaging with theories drawing on a wide range of social influences or encompassing a broad array of interpretations of the nature of decisions. Although basic considerations about decision-making are presented in the first place in this chapter – in order to define concepts such as information, alternatives, criteria, choice, goals, value, preferences, environment and behaviours – this doctoral thesis particularly considers *rational choice theory*, *reasoned action theories*, *cognitive approaches* and *behaviourism* in the later parts of the argumentation. Decision analysis is therefore used as an entry point to mapping the theoretical field relating to decision-making, and can be defined as:

decision analysis

“a logical procedure for the balancing of the factors that influence a decision; the procedure incorporates uncertainties, values, and preferences in a basic structure that models the decision” (Howard 1966: 56)

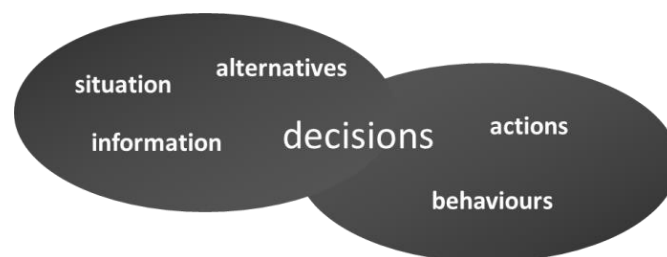
According to decision analysis practitioners⁹, decision-making can be defined as a process of identification and choice among a set of alternatives, based on an informational base and the values, goals and preferences of the agent embedded in a specific environment in which his/her decision will be conveyed under the form of actions and behaviours. At the centre of the argument about decision-making processes lies a rational understanding of the pathways followed by the agent, usually taking the form of a linear representation, of which a pictorial representation would resemble a decision tree depicting the flow of events and information in a time-sequenced manner, with the assumption that the agent is considering the likelihood of each outcome in views of his/her values, goals and preferences before undertaking actions. By exploring different courses of action that the agent chooses from (with a degree of uncertainty relating to the potential outcomes of the decision), the researcher identifies the different factors influencing the set of alternatives and the weighting assigned by the agent in order to maximise

⁹ ‘Practitioners’ here refer to the range of actors (e.g. academics, policy-makers, international organisations) that have engaged in the process of defining decisions and refining *Decision Analysis* as a tool. Howard (1966), Smith (1988), Pratt (1995), Skinner (1999) and Goodwin and Wright (2004) are examples of decision analysis ‘practitioners’ that can be considered as influential writers regarding Decision Analysis.

his/her utility. Given a variable amount of uncertainty about the consequences of his/her decisions, the agent considers the different options and possible outcomes. Decision analysis¹⁰ therefore provides a formal way of modelling the likelihood of the expected outcomes – a ‘likelihood’ that explicitly forces the agent to differentiate between the different parts of a situation, assess the level of available and relevant information to enter the decision-making process, and weigh the relative values of the potential outcomes while factoring in the timing of choices. According to Howard (2007), one of the founders of decision analysis, “*since uncertainty is the most important feature to consider in making decisions, the ability to represent knowledge in terms of probability, to see how to combine this knowledge with preferences in a reasoned way, to treat very large and complex decision problems using modern computation, and to avoid common errors of thought have combined to produce insights heretofore unobtainable*” (Howard 2007: 32).

Decision analysis is useful because of its ready practical application. In brief, it assumes that agents are fully aware and conscious and that the dynamics of their decisions can be unravelled using simple and unambiguous language.

Figure 1.1 From situations to actions and behaviours



As shown on **Figure 1.1**, this doctoral thesis aims to examine the mechanisms of decisions made in the light of a certain standard of judgment, that is, in view of a situation presenting a certain amount of information about potential alternatives. Decisions are central in the judgment process taking place between the analysis of the situation conducted by the agent and the resulting actions and behaviours followed by the agent. Human behaviour is seen as volitional (as opposed to spontaneous or involuntary) assuming that agents behave in a rational way, making use of the *available* information to consider the potential outcomes of their actions.

Decision analysis breaks these mechanisms into a number of steps supported by various conceptualisations of choice, as broadly outlined below:

- **information;** knowledge about the decision, the effects of its alternatives and the perceived probability of each alternative
- **alternatives;** possibilities one has to choose from, including identified existing alternatives versus alternatives developed to fix a situation

¹⁰ Decision analysis is understood here with a wider meaning than Decision Analysis (DA), and encompasses the work and reflections of any researcher that discusses decisions and ways of analysing these.

- **criteria;** characteristics or requirements that each alternative possesses to a greater or lesser extent
- **goals;** overall objective individuals want to achieve
- **value and preferences;** how desirable a particular outcome is considering the preferences and their hierarchy for the decision-maker
- **type of rationality;** *instrumental rationality* (reason is not the motivation, only the outcome matters), *Kantian rationality* (reason alone can stand as a motivation to act, categorical imperatives and value/ belief-oriented rationality), *collectively-led rationality* (traditional or conventional rationality, ingrained habituation and imitation)
- **type of decision-making process;** *optimising* (documenting as many alternatives as possible and choosing the very best), *satisficing* (first satisfactory alternative chosen rather than the best alternative), *maximax* (evaluating alternatives based on their maximum possible payoff, risk-taking type of behaviour), *maximin* (worst possible outcome of each decision is considered, highest minimum is chosen based on guaranteed return of the decision)
- **degree of decision embeddedness;** collective versus individual endeavours; tendency to comply, imitate or differentiate

It should be noted that a critical factor often neglected in the field of decision analysis is that despite the common representation that decision-making processes can be mapped in a linear way and pinned down on paper, the judgments resulting in a specific decision are multiple and often part of a nonlinear and recursive process. As most volitional decisions are made based on criteria and the identification of alternatives, the importance given to a particular criterion is likely to evolve as different alternatives are identified, and consequently the choice of criteria may influence the identification of further alternatives as part of an iterative process. The decision whether to perform X or Y is driven by a selection of criteria A, B or C, which either match alternatives X or Y or leave the space open to refine criteria A, B or C to allow the agent to make a better choice. Consequently, the refined criteria Aa, Bb or Cc may open the room for identifying further alternatives, such as Xx or Yy, which become possible alternatives in the light of the refined criteria, and so on. Thus, decision-making processes are constantly evolving in their actual workings. While their progress eventually leads towards a single direction, it is only *a posteriori* that the decision can be identified and depicted as a linear pathway in a given decision tree¹¹.

Finally, the delimitation between behaviours and actions is an important aspect of this research, as the two should not be confused when examining decision-making processes. While the situation and the range of available alternatives are directly observable, the decision itself can often only be documented through the observation of the resulting actions or behaviours. Behaviours can be defined as the range of actions and ways of acting followed by agents in

¹¹ This is an important assumption for the research. Decision-making pathways are presented in this doctoral thesis as mostly linear, not due to the fact the decision itself followed a linear pathway, but because the resulting decision (following an iterative decisional process) can be mapped as a linear succession of factors influencing and stirring towards the 'final' decision.

conjunction with themselves or their environment. Behaviours therefore encompass the response of agents to various internal or external stimuli. Unconscious behaviours are not investigated as part of this research as they relate to involuntary actions that are neither impulsive nor delimited by volitional decisions. Actions, on the other hand, present a similar dichotomy between conscious and unconscious responses to internal and external stimuli, although actions are more directly attributable to a decision-making process compared to behaviours which tend to include a consistent pattern of response to different stimuli, thereby engendering actions which interrelate to one another and make the mapping of a specific decision process more difficult to unpack. For the purpose of this research, behaviours are defined as the observable aspect of interest, and the 'patterned' response to stimuli is another aspect of the richness of observed behaviours which this research aims to unravel.

1.1 Rationality or irrationality

The study of decision-making is linked to the concept of rationality and the extent to which agents can be assumed to be rational or irrational. Again, there are several competing schools of thought that merit discussion here. The starting point is Rational Choice Theory (RCT), which has been the dominant paradigm in social science. According to RCT, the extent to which decisions can actually be qualified as rational is limited by the observation that decisions in the 'real world' are not constantly supported by a range of evidence backing up every intermediary choice leading to a decision. Agents themselves are often unable to trace back their decision-making processes or to identify the range of factors that made them choose between a set of alternatives. Consequently, the boundary between rationality and irrationality of decisions is thin and the extent to which choice, decisions and processes are truly reasoned can be questioned if the agent cannot recall or justify the steps taken towards his/her decision (potentially a situation of 'patterned' responses). In recent years, a growing number of decision theorists started to emphasise the need to develop a better understanding of rationality, choice and decision-making, as part of an attempt to explain one's choices and identify the considerations that make choices rational. The core questioning lies in the extent to which actions and reasons for action can be found and explained.

rationality	irrationality	Rational Choice Theory
<p><i>"an individual acts as if balancing costs against benefits to arrive at action that maximises personal advantage"</i></p> <p>(Friedman 1953: 15)</p>	<p>described as an action or opinion given through reduced use of reason, emotional distress, or cognitive deficiency</p>	<p>a framework for understanding and formally modelling social and economic behaviours</p>

Inquiries relating to rational choice can also be found in other theories, among which philosophical psychology, philosophy of economics and social philosophy have been the most influential. Economic theory implies that individuals are acting for certain reasons, reasons justifying actions to the extent they are intelligible to the agent. To this extent, reasons are different from causes, and imply deliberation and evaluation, referring more widely to how preferences and judgments of individuals influence the phase of deliberation¹². Whether reasons and causes can be differentiated has been questioned by Winch (1958) and von Wright (1971), and Davidson (1963) argued that the reasons explaining actions could also be the causes of these actions. The distinction between reasons and causes here is important, since reasons can depend on or result from the influence of beliefs and preferences that may appear irrational. In such situations, the agent is actually acting in a rational way within the constraints of a set of irrational-seeming rules (Knight 1935). In comparison, causes are mechanical and do not involve a reasoning process through which the agent acknowledges and formulates reasons for himself/herself to follow irrational-seeming rules. Defining rationality therefore entails that the agent's choice is the maximised alternative accounting for preferences and beliefs, implying a choice based on reasons (reasons which will be equivalent to causes *only after* the action has taken place). Action is reasoned to the extent that preferences and beliefs have been processed through a set of logical inferences, therefore relating the premises (reasons for undertaking action) to conclusions (final reasons for undertaking one action among other alternatives).

According to rational choice theorists¹³, individuals are seen as rational beings (controlled and calculating), holding coherent values and beliefs (stable preferences), and pursuing their goals in a context that they are fully aware of (well-informed). The underlying 'homo economicus' conception of the individual assumes that a rational behaviour implies the maximisation of utility based on the expected utility of an action. Preferences are represented by utility functions, assigning a value to each of the possible alternatives facing the individual. Choosing the preferred alternative is achieved through a rational calculation of the trade-offs between alternative choices, encompassing budget constraint, time constraint or other types of constraint. It is therefore a potential approach to conceptualising the way individuals reason and choose to act, with the advantage of articulating a set of alternatives with the purposiveness of the action. As an agent-centred approach, rational choice theory realises the modelling¹⁴ of deliberative agents' actions, encompassing their beliefs, motivations and goals.

Nevertheless, substantial criticism has been levelled at rational choice theory because it overlooks crucial aspects of choice. In particular, critics have emphasised RCT's failure to consider the complexity of human social behaviour, which encompasses fluid and interdependent emotions, mental representations of reality, inconsistent preferences and situation-dependant self-control. Moreover, agents do not exist in isolation. *Collective* rationality and *social* choice raise issues when attempting to relate social choices to individual preferences and rationality.

¹² The 'phase of deliberation' is a concept borrowed here from Aristotle (Allan 1953). Deliberation is the characteristic form of practical wisdom – a form of teleological reasoning with respect to a goal.

¹³ Among which Friedman (1953) and Becker (1976) can be considered as the main advocates of Rational Choice Theory.

¹⁴ 'Modelling' implying that a model can be derived from observed behaviours and established as a framework for the prediction of future behaviours.

Arrow's impossibility theorem (Arrow 1963) showed that social choice cannot satisfy expected utility at the individual level. Social choice theory was also further explored by Sen (1977) and Fleurbaey (2007). More precisely, rational choice theory was therefore questioned in the field of economics as a psychological critique of rational choice theory emerged as a critical challenge. According to Sen (1990),

It seems easy to accept that rationality involves many features that cannot be summarised in terms of some straightforward formula, such as binary consistency. But this recognition does not immediately lead to alternative characterisations that might be regarded as satisfactory, even though the inadequacies of the traditional assumptions of rational behaviour standardly used in economic theory have become hard to deny. It will not be an easy task to find replacements for the standard assumptions of rational behaviour... that can be found in the traditional economic literature, both because the identified deficiencies have been seen as calling for rather divergent remedies, and also because there is little hope of finding an alternative assumption structure that will be as simple and usable as the traditional assumptions of self-interest maximisation, or of consistency of choice.

(Sen 1990: 206)

1.2 Questioning rational choice theory: An inquiry into behaviours and the decision environment

Behavioural decision research provides one possible way of taking the debate forward. It was first associated with Simon (1959) and later by Gigerenzer and Selten (2001), and argued against pure rationality by putting forward the idea that rationality was bounded, biased, and that economics should go beyond the atomistic conception of the individual, and towards a more ecological conception of the individual and his/her rationality. Recent works in behavioural theory have further advanced this with new ideas, namely by Kahneman and Tversky (2000), who attempted to take the psychological effects of uncertainty into account and thereby revised the economic atomist conception of the individual. Consequently, the premises of this field employ a behavioural vocabulary taken from maximisation, cost and utilitarian theory vocabulary, while still examining behavioural variances, correlates and phenomena. To do this, they relied on modelling and experiments with human subjects in ordinary situations (micro-social systems such as laboratory groups, natural groups, communities, etc.) as primary sources of information¹⁵. As the concept of rationality keeps evolving, the qualifying idea of individuals being 'humanly rational' is gaining prominence. However, instrumental rationality remains an important component in

¹⁵ As such, the case study chosen as part of the doctoral thesis could have been a good candidate for a behavioural economics approach. Nevertheless, behavioural economists tend to consider much 'narrower' and 'flexible' experiments which can be replicated within a laboratory by placing the participants within certain conditions that can be controlled for or modified as needed. This therefore prevents the application of a simple behaviour economics framework to the Thapathali case study where participants are subjected to specific conditions in a circumstantial way.

behavioural models despite the weakening assumptions about individual choice and logical decision-making (Anand and Stephen 2011).

The behavioural approach to decision-making therefore implies the investigation of the stimuli at play and the influence of the external environment. Empirical research in behavioural studies (behavioural economics, social psychology and cognitive theories) has provided new insights as to how social and situational factors interact with rational choices. Among several findings, the role of mental representations and social construction of reality in determining behaviour patterns (Ross and Nisbett 1991; Thomas 1923), but also the capacity of situational factors to frame behaviours regardless of personal dispositions (Milgram 1974) are important cognitive phenomena influencing individual decision-making. Along with those, various factors are said to catalyse certain behaviours once a first step has been taken towards them (Lewin 1951). In addition, a deeper understanding of cognitive principles leads to new insights – related to attitudes towards risk and planning (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Kahneman and Tversky 2000), to the relative values assigned to present and future gains and to self-control (Schelling 1984) – that can explain deviance from rational behaviours. The nature of reasoned action (Ajzen 1980) has been challenged with empirical investigations, and defining behaviour became an overly complex task as the importance of considering more factors became apparent.

A key criticism of the traditional utility model relates to psychological factors such as situational factors that influence behaviours regardless of dispositions or preferences. Milgram's obedience studies (1974), along with Darley and Batson's seminarians' study (1973) in which seminarians late for a practice sermon failed to deliver the appropriate help to someone in need on their way, show that the constraints created by situational and external factors are vital for understanding the behaviours of individuals. As complex human information processing systems can be, it appears that even simple factors have a powerful impact on the decisions made by rational agents. Among other findings, Kahneman and Tversky (2000) showed that behaviours related to losses and gains were strongly affected by bias related to loss aversion, leading to an observable reluctance to move from the status quo. In the same vein, individuals are typically unlikely to learn from past experience or to consider opportunity costs accurately. Similarly, situationist psychologists (Mischel 1995) showed that individuals are easily influenced and manipulated by situational elements, in addition to the influence of their internal traits or motivations. The basic assumption of behavioural theories is that they can predict and model patterns of 'irrational' decision-making (non-rational, inconsistent or non-self-interested behaviours), by contextualising and explaining various behaviours (Ariely 2008). As summarised by Camerer and Loewenstein (2004) under the expression of '*greater psychological realism*', the neoclassical approach should question its assumptions, but remains useful for the understanding of the bases of behaviour.

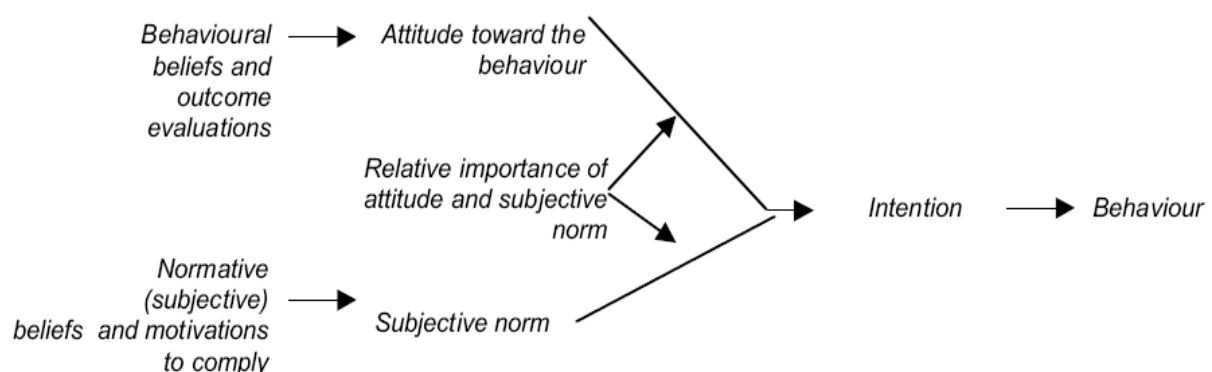
As a result, there has been a wide range of theoretical constructs seeking to account for behaviours in various domains of life (health behaviours, politics and marketing, family and workplace, environmental behaviour), all of which combine different methods of analysis, measurement and prediction of behaviour. Bridging psychology, behavioural science and cognitive theories therefore allows a better understanding of choice and reasoned action. This endeavour dates as far back as Simon's body of work on theories of decision-making and

behavioural science (Simon 1959). As economists aim to find generalisations about human behaviours in economic situations, social psychology and cognitive theorists are likely to seek similar generalisations within theories of human behaviour (Simon 1959). Common interests among these disciplines tend to converge as the complexity of the environment is more finely embedded in theories: the example of 'homo economicus' shows how economists simplify their assumptions when they deal with simple, static situations in which the agent has a single purpose; and behavioural economists point out the need for knowing more about the processes 'homo economicus' experiences in the environment where s/he is to achieve his/her goals (Simon 1959). Consequently, the demand for a broader picture of human behaviour has proven difficult to fulfil, as behavioural sciences derive from many disciplines and influencers with similarly valid (and invalid) theoretical frameworks.

1.3 Introducing social psychology

In order to investigate decisions and associated behavioural patterns, a solid base for the conceptual model used in this research is the Reasoned Action Approach. In the absence of an analytical, holistic and systematic method for analysing behavioural patterns, the modelling of behaviours using Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action implies that the attributes of choice options (reasons, intentions, beliefs, norms given by the respondent for choosing a certain option) should be explored by looking at *the effect of intention on behaviour*. The Reasoned Action Approach (Ajzen 1991) establishes the linkages and correlations between characteristics of behaviour and intentions in order to unpack and predict human behaviour.

Figure 1.2 Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action



Source: Ajzen (1991)

Developed by psychologists and social psychologists (McKemey and Sakyi-Dawson 2000), the Theory of Reasoned Action is based on expected utility models developed by economists (Lynne 1995) – thereby taking an individualistic stand – with an emphasis on the *expected value of human behaviour*. Human behaviour is seen as volitional, assuming human beings behave in a rational way, making use of the available information to consider the potential outcomes of their actions: "the theory postulates that a person's intention to perform (or not perform) a behaviour is the immediate determinant of that action; barring unforeseen events, people are expected to act in accordance with their intentions" (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 12). Following these

assumptions, the immediate antecedent to behaviour – the intention to perform a behaviour – becomes the element to unpack through listing the determinants of behavioural intent (Fishbein and Manfredo 1992). Performing a behaviour is based on attitudes towards a specific behaviour and social norms influencing behaviour through the perception of social values and pressures. Attitudes result from beliefs specific to the individual involved, and his/her assessment of the expected value of a behaviour stirs his/her decision to perform or not perform. As shown in **Figure 1.2**, norms are related to the perception of social pressure the individual is experiencing, which is his/her subjective interpretation of how s/he should behave based on how others feel ("motivation to comply with these 'others'" (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 12)).

The Theory of Reasoned Action presents certain limitations in the way human behaviour is modelled, as norms and social representations towards certain behaviours can be difficult to disentangle and to explore as objective determinants of human actions. Ajzen presupposes an objective approach to intentions and behaviours as s/he unpacks decision-making processes as social phenomena that confront the agent as an external fact beyond his/her reach or influence (Bryman 2008). By introducing the intervention of subjective norms in the decision process, Ajzen places the Theory of Reasoned Action at crossroads between objectivism and subjectivism, incorporating the meanings that others give to their actions and how these meanings interact with the way the agent makes his/her decisions. It follows that the primary focus of the Theory of Reasoned Action is set at the level of the agent, with an individualistic perspective that entails that the agent is the central focus – decision-making being understood by examining how it results from the motivations and actions of individual agents (methodological individualism¹⁶).

A key challenge with the Theory of Reasoned Action is therefore that it does not consider the social structures, institutions, norms and beliefs that constitute the essence of others' behaviours, nor the interactions between norms for an agent belonging to different sub-groups, among different 'others' with different 'others' behaviours'. Following the approach of *methodological localism*¹⁷, social structures are key and only possible insofar as they are embodied in the actions and states of socially constructed individuals, who live, act, and develop within a set of local social relationships, institutions, norms, and rules – resulting into the production of a normative environment at the level of the social group and the different sub-groups. As a result, the Theory of Reasoned Action needs to be expanded in order to account for additional mechanisms explaining decisions, beyond the role of individual behavioural intent.

1.4 Levels of decision-making and ontological approach

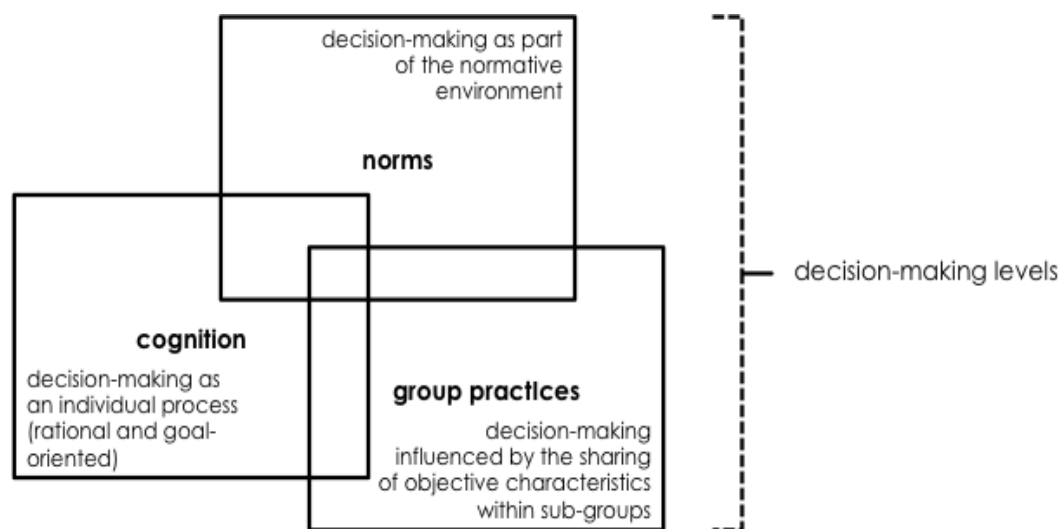
Following the reflections presented in Chapter 1 so far, three different decision-making levels have been identified that can potentially address the limitations of existing frameworks (**Figure 1.3**).

¹⁶ Refer to the introduction of the doctoral thesis for a discussion of objectivism, subjectivism, holism and methodological individualism.

¹⁷ Defined in the introduction as the third way (beyond holism and methodological individualism): Methodological localism argues that the constitutive particle of the social world is the socially-embedded actor and his/her recurring interactions with other social actors and social groups.

1. **From a normative perspective**, the analysis of individual decisions is concerned with the logic of decisions as influenced by the normative environment.
2. **From a cognitive perspective**, decision-making is regarded as a structured and iterative process including interactions with the normative environment while applying different types of rationality to the decisional process. The approach suggested here is drawn from Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action¹⁸ and aims at investigating decisions, the subjective norms and the motivation to comply with others' behaviours.
3. **From a social sub-group perspective**, it is essential to examine individual decisions in the context of the sub-groups to which agents belong as they share a similar set of objective characteristics. The practice of norms within these sub-groups is explored following Bourdieu's Theory of Practice¹⁹.

Figure 1.3 Levels of decision-making



Using these three entry points (norms, cognition and group practices) to unpack decision-making, the research sets out a conceptual framework based on theoretical approaches to decision-making processes, enriched with hypotheses from recent research in behavioural theory and social psychology.

Epistemologically, positivism advocates for research investigations in which knowledge is derived from sensory and descriptive experiences. In order to explore how choices are made – within a specific decision environment and as part of specific decision-making processes – knowledge is likely to be derived from social interactions, individual behaviour, structure and influence of the external environment. Applying positivism to unveil the structures in which phenomena took place entails an interpretation of human behaviour as a prerequisite to a causal explanation of action. To a certain extent, this research takes a partial constructivist stand, building upon the interpretation of an observed phenomenon from the point of view of the

¹⁸ Refer to 1.3 in Chapter 1.

¹⁹ Refer to 1.7 in Chapter 1.

agents involved – however only insofar as the micro-level structures in which agents perform have been unravelled from a positivist perspective (sensory and descriptive experiences).

Ontologically, the researched entity for the study of decision-making processes is the individual – the individual as an entity studied in a social context with a particular focus on the sociological and psychological aspects of choice. Both objectivism and constructionism are therefore rallied for the purpose of this research, (1) **objectivism** as a tool to understand the norms and value system as objective entities existing largely autonomously from social agents, and (2) **constructionism** as a framework to interpret social phenomena such as choice, behaviour and action as produced by agents' interpretations through social interaction and continuously revised within a social context.

Consequently, the research process adopted for this research is expected to reconcile social psychology and behavioural theories, namely Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, with their embeddedness in constructivist sociological approaches (namely Bourdieu's Theory of Practice). Decisions are assumed to be made at the individual level, while the decision-making pathways, under the influence of a normative environment, are socially constructed at the level of the social group. It is therefore assumed that:

- **cognition** – individual decision-making should first be regarded as a structured and iterative process including interactions with the normative environment to which agents apply different types of rationality in their decisional process;
- **norms** – the analysis of individual decisions is secondly concerned with the logic of decisions as influenced by the normative environment, thereby implying a partial constructivist stand, building upon the interpretation of an observed phenomenon from the point of view of the agents involved; and
- **group practices** – individual decisions should be discussed within the context of the sub-groups to which agents belong. The practice of norms within these sub-groups is likely to be affected by the fact agents share a similar set of characteristics (income, education, origin, etc.).

1.5 Individual preferences towards behaviours and micro-level structures

As explained above, this research assumes a conception of social reality that places the individual agent as a central focus point while being the primary unit whereby social phenomena are expressed and observable (methodological localism²⁰). As such, it embeds a sociological approach to behaviours and incorporates a social angle to behavioural theories.

²⁰ Defined in the introduction as the third way (beyond holism and methodological individualism): Methodological localism argues that the constitutive particle of the social world is the socially-embedded actor and his/her recurring interactions with other social actors and social groups.

Layers of the social environment

Within that social angle, different layers of the social environment can be of interest to understand how agents perceive social situations and how they choose to act within them. Normative systems are transmitted and experienced through different entities, among which the household, the kin system and the social group are assumed to be the most important aggregates to investigate.

- **The household ecosystem²¹:** To a certain extent, decisions are made at the level of the household – a group of people pooling resources and ‘eat[ing] from the same pot’ (Robertson 1984) – and can be described as a group of individuals seeking to steer household choices with respect to their own preferences (Becker 1981). Coast and Randall (2010) argue that household definitions matter as the society’s basic unit influences members’ well-being and increasingly serves as the dominant measurement unit for poverty surveys. There are multiple dimensions of residence, eating, sleeping, sharing of economic resources and responsibilities that interact at the level of the household. However, the interpretation of data collected at the household level may not represent the fundamental units of the society under scrutiny, which entails that a more flexible definition of the household unit may be needed to explore the different contributions of members to the household economy – e.g. collecting data in ways that allow multiple configurations (who slept there the night before, who ate from the common kitchen today, etc.). Models of Pareto efficiency of household choices (Chiappori 1992) indicate that time allocation, decision-making related to the allocation of wage work and house work among household members (Pitt and Rosenzweig 1990), earning versus non-earning members of the household, strength of hierarchy, transmission of coping strategies (Moore 2001) and membership/ kinship norms (Hoff and Sen 2005) are essential components of household organisational patterns. Therefore, as decisions related to the survival of the household imply collective and individual strategies in opting for certain livelihoods, the resulting household resources are likely to follow various structures in terms of allocation between the household members. Preferential nutrition, differences in education and gender effects have a circular effect on the allocation of household members between wage work and house work, and the overall strategy of the household – which underlines the complexities of the ecosystem of the household and its precarious balance²².
- **The kin system:** Kinship norms are inherently economic institutions and political institutions (Sindzingre 2006a) that ensure cooperation in established statuses and hierarchies among members (according to age or gender for instance) and allocation of rights (property, access to goods, work). The kin group establishes a specific set of rules, “a system of

²¹ The term ‘ecosystem’ is used here to refer to a community of individuals (the household) in conjunction with the external components of the household environment (peers, wider community, local economy, non-market interactions, education opportunities, income-generating opportunities, etc.), interacting as a system. The household is considered to be an ecosystem of its own, embedded in a local or micro-environment.

²² Chapter 2 further explores the concept of household in poverty contexts.

shared rights and obligations encompassing a large number of near and distant relatives" (Wolf 1955: 3).

- **The social group:** A social group is a collection of people who interact with each other and share similar characteristics. The particular stand taken for the purpose of this research is based on socio-psychologists Turner (1982) and Platow (2005)'s interpretations of the meaning of what constitutes a social group, which stress the importance of interdependence and objective similarity. Firstly, social identity within social groups is understood as a relational term, defining group members' identity as a function of their similarities and differences with others. According to Platow (2005: 543), "*group processes are made possible through the categorisation of self as a group member – psychologically interchangeable with others*". It follows that social identity is both the basis for shared social action between group members and the *product* of the wider social world's history and present²³ – therefore establishing the linkage between the social group and the rest of society. The ways that groups work in society are critical to the intra-social group dynamics that affect its group members.

To unpack the social environment and its different layers demonstrates the existence of a wide range of factors likely to influence decision-making processes. While the decision environment is a component of this research, the ways in which it interacts with various steps of decision-making is the key aspect of the conceptual framework described here.

Linkages between attitudes and behaviours

The behavioural approach used for the purpose of this research places the individual agent with his/her attitudes and preferences as a central focus point, the social environment influencing his/her particular actions. Based on Ajzen's work (1991), whether the agent *systematically* acts in accordance to his/her preferences could not been demonstrated. Therefore the type of relationship existing between attitudes/ preferences and actual behaviours is a key determinant in the study of decision-making processes. It can demonstrate whether attitudes held by the agent entail systematic and corresponding behaviours or whether the agent is more likely to change his/her behaviour in light of the influence of the environment.

The linkages between attitudes/ preferences and behaviours have been explored by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), who conducted an empirical review of the relation between attitude and behaviour. A renewed interest in the ways attitudes and preferences interact with actions and behaviours was taking place in the field of social psychology in the 1970s (Brannon 1976; Liska 1975; Schuman and Johnson 1976). However, the 'attitude concept' has been gradually replaced by the idea that attitudes are often unrelated to behaviour, making the influence of subjective norms more central to the unpacking of decision-making processes: "*a person's attitude toward an object influences the overall pattern of his responses to the object, but (...) it need not predict any given action. (...) A single behaviour is determined by the intention to*

²³ As such, the social group is concomitantly defined from an objectivist perspective and a social constructionist perspective.

perform the behaviour in question. A person's intention is in turn a function of his attitude toward performing the behaviour and of his subjective norm" (Ajzen and Fishbein 1977: 893).

It follows that a central assumption of this research is to consider the individual as a socially-embedded actor, subjected to subjective norms and the normative environment. Attitudes and preferences are embedded in the agent's behaviour but are not necessarily central to the decision-making processes at play. Consequently, for the purpose of this research, the primary focus for unpacking decision-making processes has been shifted to *the influence of the decision environment*, using a behavioural understanding of individual actions. As a result, the conceptual framework puts forward the investigation of the dynamics of the decision environment and the subjective norms that emerge from the interactions of the agent with the decision environment – which is a radical shift from purely psychological approaches to decisions and can be qualified as a 'psycho-sociological approach'.

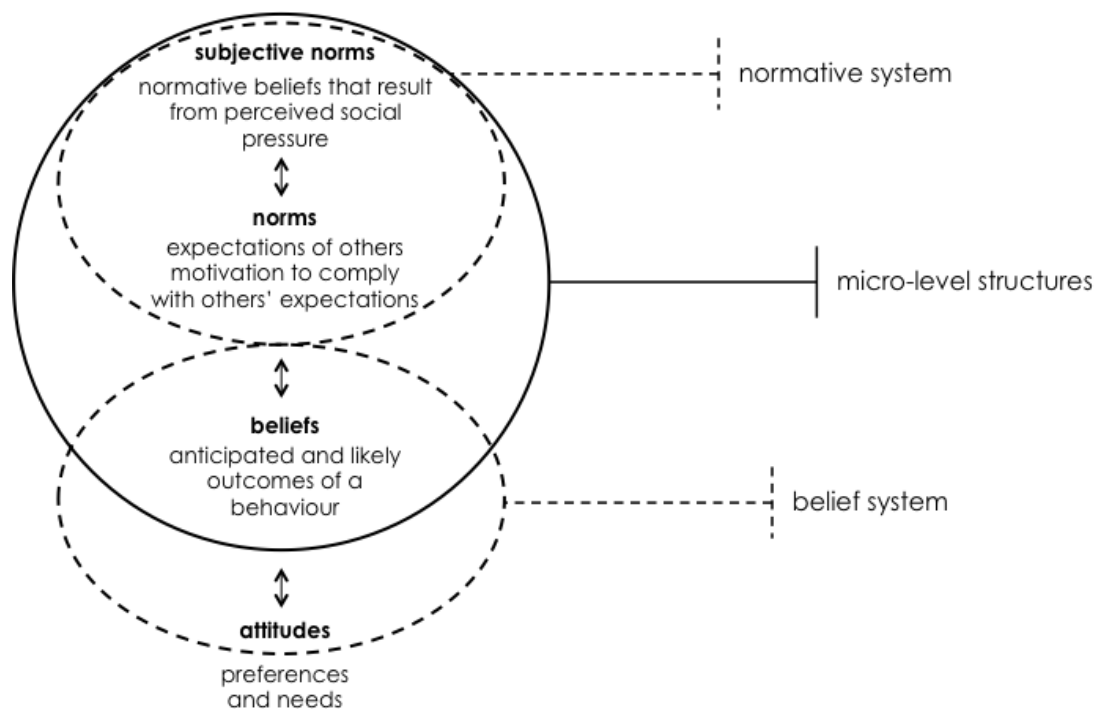
Introducing micro institutionalism to explore micro-level structures

Micro institutionalism comes into play as it allows a refined understanding of the micro-level structures shaping the decision environment (**Figure 1.4**) in which the agent makes his/her decisions. Exploring behaviours through the lens of micro institutionalism grounds the pathways through which individuals embed their decisions as part of the decision environment. The literature on institutionalism investigates particular behavioural patterns that are standardised, i.e. behaviours which are a standard response in or to a particular type of situation. The agent's subjective norm is therefore the component of interest and is assumed to be part of a normative 'institution' which delimits the influence of the decision environment. When making a decision, the socially-embedded agent is faced with (1) a set of alternatives to choose from and (2) his/her subjective interpretation of the institutionalised norms that shape his/her affiliation to a particular social group.

An influential founder of institutional theory, Giddens, defines institutions as "*structured social practices that have a broad spatial and temporal extension: that are structured in what the historian Braudel calls the *longue durée* of time, and which are followed or acknowledged by the majority of the members of a society*" (Giddens 1981: 9). According to Rice (2012: 24), "*institutions are ideas about the world that arguably come into being through the aggregated and increasingly standardised interactions of people. Once created, institutions then give meaning, purpose and direction to human interaction in a particular type of situation but thereby also restrict the action patterns that are relevant, appropriate, or even permitted in that type of situation*".

attitudes	beliefs	norms	subjective norms
are individually-defined preferences towards a behaviour	are the anticipated and likely outcomes of a behaviour and the evaluations of these outcomes	are the expectations of others and the motivation to comply with these expectations	are the normative beliefs that result from perceived social pressure

Figure 1.4 The micro-level structure components: Norms and subjective norms/ normative beliefs



Therefore, while the agent is a central player in the process of making decisions, it is assumed for the purpose of this research that the agent interpret social norms by being subjected to a range of institutionalised practices. This assumption does not contradict the use of an actor-centred sociology²⁴, as the mapping of institutionalised norms is taken here as a prerequisite to the nuancing of a micro institutional approach, based on actors whose thoughts and actions make up the social processes of interest. According to Rice (2012: 39), “all social reality begins with individual human action; (...) aggregated and increasingly routinised (inter-) action leads to the emergence of institutions which form part of larger economic, political and cultural systemic landscapes; (...) institutions, once emerged, frame and/or restrict the actions that are relevant, appropriate, or permitted in certain types of situations; and (...) systemic changes may induce alterations in the meaning or scope of institutions, thus changing the prerequisites for individual action”. Therefore, it should be noted that micro institutionalism does not fully determine individual action, and that autonomous action exists outside of institutional ‘blueprints’, thereby leaving room for the agent to navigate within normative systems and express his/her intention to perform a behaviour. Hypotheses and propositions from a micro institutionalist perspective involve a range of patterns to be explored at the level of the decision environment of interest, and predict²⁵ the aspects in which institutionalised practices are likely to affect individual behaviours.

Micro institutionalist propositions and the decision environment

According to Sperber (2000) normative systems exist as entities of their own. Social norms include sets of beliefs which are *structuring* beliefs: they are meta-beliefs or meta-representations.

²⁴ That is, choosing to place the unit of analysis at the level of the socially-embedded agent. Refer to the introduction for a discussion of methodological localism.

²⁵ Predict or model, which implies that a model can be derived from observed behaviours and established as a framework for the prediction of future behaviours.

These representations have a deontic form, and convey instructions on representations and specific behaviours (Sperber 2000). The cognitive dimension of these meta-beliefs are multiple as they include the interplay of mental representations, rules and behaviour, and involve different cognitive layers which are formed by distinguished entities such as language, perception and emotion²⁶. Micro-level structures therefore result from a composite aggregation of beliefs and norms, which, with psychological states and routines, are mutually reinforcing and form micro-level institutions. The *structuring* beliefs mentioned by Sperber are the normative beliefs/ subjective norms defined as part of the conceptual framework.

The institutionalisation of norms draws upon the idea of an existing social stability within the belief system of a particular social group. Attention is given to the reproductive processes that function as stable patterns for sequences of activities which are being routinely enacted. Therefore, *"institutionalisation [is] defined in terms of the processes by which such patterns achieve normative and cognitive fixity, and become taken for granted"* (Sindzingre 2007: 12). Durlauf (2002) further explains that norms perpetuate, since the learning processes which would imply a divergence from these norms are costly for the agent, so that changing social norms becomes more and more costly as beliefs stabilise. In his theory of social interactions, Durlauf presents the argument that agents are being influenced by the choices of other agents, which are perpetuated through the existence of feedback loops. From past choices of other agents, the agent shapes his/her own choices by integrating others' feedback into his/her decision-making process. The importance of these cognitive processes can only be observed and understood at the level of the social group, thereby unravelling the effects of interactions within a specific group. Durlauf (2002) further emphasises the idea of affiliation to a social group through the 'membership' theory. Group membership attributes objective and subjective characteristics to an individual agent based upon the other members' characteristics composing the social group. As a result, multiple equilibria in terms of beliefs may emerge from *"the beliefs that individuals have about what others will do within given membership groups, and depend on the incentives to behave similarly to others, which may create discontinuities"* (Sindzingre 2007: 23).

Norms therefore perpetuate and coordinate behaviours through the repetition of types of behaviours that are deemed acceptable by a social group. As such, various payoffs coexist and dictate the extent to which conformity minimises the risk of deviant behaviours and sanctions. The trust in rules and their resulting enforcement only stabilise as the outcomes occur in line with the expectations of the social group. This implies that certain experimentations of variant behaviours may also allow a change in the normative system. In contrast, according to Sindzingre (2007), it appears that certain categories of beliefs are difficult to revise. Cognitive mechanisms make it so that individuals tend to deny that these beliefs may be biased. This argument, also known as 'cognitive inaccessibility', is emphasised by Camerer (2005). It follows that the stabilisation of certain types of behaviours may entail the existence of 'institutional traps', defined by Bowles as: *"beliefs related to affiliation (e.g., ethnic and religious) or politics (e.g., maintained by populist leaders, or the 'voluntary servitude' coined by La Boetie) are good candidates for weakly*

²⁶ This supports the argument about the use of a 'psycho-sociological approach' to unravel the micro-level structures.

revisable beliefs" (Sindzingre 2007: 16). The process through which norms and beliefs become micro-level institutions therefore affects the different layers of the social environment, as pointed out by Hoff and Sen (2006) who demonstrated that kinship norms "may be an inefficient device, even if it offers protection in a context of uncertainty, as when facing economic change and modernisation. Kinship groups may lead to exit deterrence vis-à-vis their members, the outcome being what Hoff and Sen call 'collective conservatism'" (Sindzingre 2007: 31).

1.6 Cognition and decision pathways in the normative environment

Micro institutionalism gives a framework to unpack the composite aggregation of beliefs and norms. These interfere with psychological states and routines, and a range of cognitive factors as presented in the section below. To unpack the subjective norms (as presented by Ajzen and Fishbein) influencing individual behaviours consequently implies an inquiry into the micro-level structures of the environment in which decisions are made. As explained by Heath (1976),

The rational choice approach can only explain what people do. It can explain why people might institute a norm and might then enforce it, but it cannot explain why they should change their values – for this is what internalisation amounts to. Values ... must always remain a "given" in the rational choice approach and to explain how they change we should have to introduce additional psychological mechanisms that have nothing to do with rationality.

(Heath 1976: 64)

While micro institutionalism tends to shift away from cognitive interpretations, the cognitive aspects of decision-making processes are nonetheless central in this research as decision-making is regarded as a structured and iterative process involving different types of rational pathways in the decisional process²⁷. The responses to rules, beliefs and norms are assumed to take place at the individual level, from a cognitive perspective. These cognitive pathways (from information, criteria to different type of rationality) give reasons and meanings to decisions made by agents.

To ponder the importance of the normative environment and to place the influence of the normative environment within an agent's 'mind' implies the use of an analytical matrix of the existing types of rationality expected to give a comprehensive account of the various ways in which agents are likely to 'cognitively' provide an explanation for their choices and decisions. In light of these categories of rationality, the agent is considered as an entity capable of rational decisions, to the extent that these decisions follow a rational pathway in the meaning and narrative the agent builds for himself/herself around his/her decisions.

As such, for the purpose of this research, decisions are not assessed from a purely rational standpoint encompassing 'external' validity, but on the contrary are explored in light of the cognitive rationale ('internal' validity) that the agent creates for himself/herself. Elster (2007)

²⁷ Refer to 1.4.

attempted to apply rational choice theory to different fields of social behaviour – his argument being that the existence of irrational behaviours is always due to rational explanations: endogenous preference formation (preferences are adaptive to contexts), hysteresis (different preferences are revealed asking for them in different ways), imperfect rationality (emotions, habits). Another approach to rationality, bearing in mind that “to explain how they [norms] change we should have to introduce additional psychological mechanisms that have nothing to do with rationality” (Heath 1976: 64) is based on Weber’s understanding and interpretation of rationality (Weber 1922), and serves as a cornerstone for the analysis of rationalisation processes surrounding decision-making:

- **instrumental rationality:** reason is not the motivation, only the outcome matters;
- **Kantian rationality:** reason alone can stand as a motivation to act, categorical imperatives and value/ belief-oriented rationality; and
- **collectively-led rationality:** traditional or conventional rationality, ingrained habituation and imitation.

Processes supporting the rationale for a specific behaviour under each of these categories of rationality are explored using the following sub-categories, applicable to each of the above:

- **optimising process:** documenting as many alternatives as possible and choosing the very best;
- **satisficing:** first satisfactory alternative chosen rather than the best alternative;
- **maximax:** evaluating alternatives based on their maximum possible payoff, risk-taking type of behaviour; and
- **maximin:** worst possible outcome of each decision is considered, highest minimum is chosen based on guaranteed return of the decision.

It follows that an agent’s ‘subjective norm’ and ‘intention to perform’ (based on Ajzen’s Theory of Reasoned Action) can be supplemented by micro institutionalist²⁸ and cognitivist²⁹ interpretations. These extensions of Ajzen’s primary model address the limitations outlined above, that is, that Ajzen does not fully consider the social structures, institutions, norms and beliefs that constitute the essence of others’ behaviours, nor the interactions between norms for an agent belonging to different sub-groups.

Micro institutionalism allows a refined understanding of the micro-level structures of the environment in which decisions are made and provides insights as to how these micro-structures shape recurrent patterns in responses to rules and norms, thereby addressing the behavioural limitations such as unstable preferences, dispositions, heuristics, situational factors, as it is assumed that the cognitive routines of the agent are the primary factors of interest when exploring decision-making processes. Attitudes, preferences and psychological states are assumed to be

²⁸ That is, the micro institutionalist investigation of factors structuring the decision environment (influence of the ‘subjective norm’).

²⁹ That is, the cognitive interpretation of decision-making through the analysis of rationalisation (influence of the ‘intention to perform’).

secondary in predicting the types of behaviour the agent will perform. Finally, the agent is observed as an entity capable of 'rational' decisions, to the extent that these decisions follow a rational pathway in the meaning and narrative the agent builds for himself/herself around his/her decisions. It follows that the agent is conceived, for the purpose of this research, as a socially-embedded individual who, although subjected to the influence of micro-level norms, is likely to have the agency to create his/her own narrative supporting the rationale for his/her behaviours. As such, the conceptualisation of rationality and cognitive processes presented here and used later in this research forms the framework used to explore the potential ways in which the agent rationalises his/her decisions.

1.7 The practice of norms: Objective characteristics and sub-groups explored from the perspective of Bourdieu

The research process adopted for this research expects to reconcile social psychology and behavioural theories, namely Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, with their embeddedness in constructivist sociological approaches, namely Bourdieu's Theory of Practice. Decisions are assumed to be made at the individual level, while the practices of decision-making, under the influence of a normative environment, are socially constructed at the level of social groups.

According to Bourdieu's understanding of social groups (Bourdieu 1980), agents do not operate in the ways described by rational choice theory, that is, as continuously calculating agents agreeing to *explicit* rational and economic criteria. Bourdieu argues that social agents operate according to an *implicit* practical logic within a set of structured dispositions shared at the level of social groups. While the research focuses on a community (Thapathali case study) that can be equated to the functioning of a social group³⁰, the hypothesis is that sub-groups may exist within a social group and thereby constitute an additional 'social layer' to investigate³¹.

The concept of 'groups'

It is assumed that individual decisions are not solely framed by the normative environment and agents' cognitive processes, but that they are also influenced in the context of the sub-groups³² to which agents belong as they share a similar set of objective characteristics (income levels, educational levels, place of origin, etc.). To evaluate the emergence of group norms from the perspective of objective characteristics implies going beyond a micro institutionalist focused behavioural approach, i.e. expanding the analysis to 'groups' and defining the limitations of these groups by investigating the practice of norms and their emergence at a social group level. While Ajzen refers to 'others' (motivation to comply with others' behaviours), it is assumed for the

³⁰ This affirmation is demonstrated in Chapter 5.

³¹ Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is therefore applied to the case study by considering the Thapathali community as a 'society of its own', within which different social groups (here, sub-groups) co-exist. This approach is more particularly enabled by the atypicality of the case study under scrutiny – which figures as a partially isolated community from the influence of newcomers and set within a delimited timeframe (settlement, eviction, post-eviction).

³² As discussed in Section 1.5, a social group is defined as a collection of people who interact with each other and share similar characteristics.

purpose of this research that 'others' may belong to groups through which the practice of norms is objectivised following the sharing of objective characteristics.

Bourdieu's structural constructivism

The nature of social behaviour can be understood in different ways. In Bourdieu's words, phenomenology tries *"to make explicit the truth of primary experience of the social world, i.e. all that is inscribed in the relationship of familiarity with the familiar environment, the unquestioning apprehension of the social world which, by definition, does not reflect on itself and excludes the question of the conditions of its own possibility"* (Bourdieu 1977: 3). Theory, by contrast, tries to unveil the structures, existing prior to the individuals, under which the individual is alienated – revealing the structure of human actions exposes the underlying grammar that renders a text, signs, myths or a social organisation intelligible. A third approach is Bourdieu's structural constructivism – here the approach of interest – as it brings together the notion of social behaviour as a predefined script, a static code (structuralism), and the notion of a dynamic construction of that code through a continuous succession of human actions (constructivism) in which individual strategies are encompassed (the practical mastery of situations).

The Theory of Practice proposed by Bourdieu reconciles agency's influence and structure's influence – structural determinism and agent's intentionality. Strategies are deployed by individuals (intentionality/ 'intent to perform') in order to cope with the rules (the script, the code forming the structure of social actions/ 'subjective norm'); however, those individuals are not scheming social agents fully conscious of their intentions³³ – but rather agents enculturated with structured dispositions (habitus) – which implies a misrecognition of actions (reasons for those actions may not be the ones presented by individuals, they are 'non-official' strategies³⁴). The habitus defines an 'in-between', a system of schemes of perceptions, representations and actions, where the individual has a *partial* say: *"the system of dispositions – a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles, an internal law relaying the continuous exercise of the law of external necessities (irreducible to immediate conjunctural constraints) – is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism discerns in the social world without being able to give them a rational basis"* (Bourdieu 1977: 82).

Applying Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

The research employs Bourdieu's Theory of Practice as part of its conceptual framework. Rules and normative systems are explored in the light of their influence upon the beliefs held by agents at the level of sub-groups. Building on Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus (1984), this stage of the research aims at exploring the existence of belief and practice fields through the lens of agents' objective characteristics such as income, household size, origin, religion, education level, allowing to test the linkages between objective characteristics and the emergence and

³³ As stated earlier, unconscious behaviours are not investigated as part of this research as they relate to involuntary actions which are not impelled nor delimited by volitional decisions. By contrast, behaviours that partially result from the influence of norms, 'dictating' the unconscious intent to perform for an agent, are considered as volitional.

³⁴ In relation to the rationalisation of decisions, refer to the introduction of the doctoral thesis.

reproduction of normative systems through practices at the level of sub-groups identified by these characteristics.

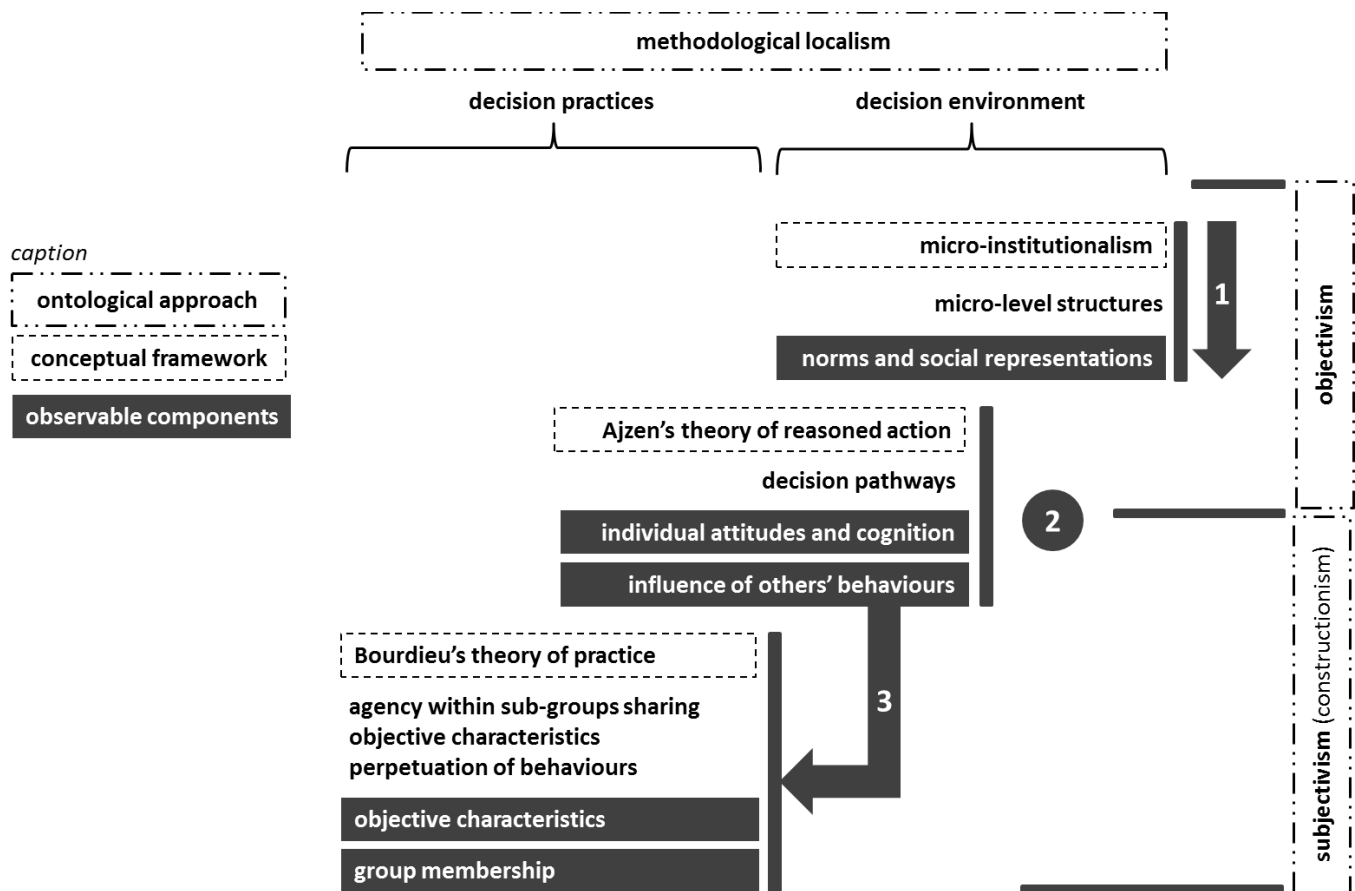
As outlined in Section 1.5, processes of norm institutionalisation have been mapped by micro institutionalist theorists, although a missing component lies in the extent to which practices link to the objective socio-economic characteristics and reinforce the existence of normative systems. *Fields* (sub-structures with a relative autonomy although anchored in the larger social structure, or sub-groups) such as income, household size, origin, religion, education level are important determinants of the processes by which norms are being produced and reproduced by each sub-group of agents, as each of the field dimensions implies specific worldviews recurrently shared and '*practiced*' by agents. Fields therefore shape different habitus for the different sub-groups – habitus systems which can be understood as a set of structured dispositions, a predefined script, a static code by which individual strategies abide. *Bourdieuian fields* are therefore explored as part of this research through a mapping of the degree of homothety between objective characteristics and habitus systems, allowing (1) a categorisation of norms and beliefs in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of agents and (2) an in-depth understanding of how these beliefs are '*practiced*' by agents within each field.

This predictive component of the research³⁵ aims at exploring the likelihood of beliefs to emerge from groups identified by the socio-demographic characteristics of their members, and takes a step towards the generalisation of the research findings by predicting a phenomenon on the basis of the observed micro-level structures and identified behaviours within these structures. It is hypothesised here that decisions are influenced by the interplay of different groups within a community, the characteristics of which are expressed through socio-economic statuses, origin of migration, reasons for migration, religious affiliation and social network assets. The conceptual framework and its ontological assumptions are summarised in **Figure 1.5**.

1. **From a normative perspective**, the analysis of individual decisions is concerned with the logic of decisions as influenced by the normative environment. Micro institutionalism provides a framework for investigating the micro-level structures of the decision environment.
2. **From a cognitive perspective**, decision-making analysis is drawn from Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action and aims at investigating individual decisions, the subjective norms and the motivation to comply with others' behaviours.
3. **From a social sub-group perspective**, individual decisions are examined in the context of the sub-groups to which agents belong as they share a similar set of objective characteristics. The practice of norms within these sub-groups is explored following Bourdieu's Theory of Practice.

³⁵ Refer to 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3.

Figure 1.5 Ontological approach and conceptual framework for the research



2. Poverty, making a living and decisions

While decision-making analysis can be used to investigate almost any type of volitional decision, this research is specifically interested in decision-making pathways followed by agents in situations of poverty. The focus here relates to the category of decisions that induce specific ways of making a living for individuals living in poverty. Livelihood strategies, ways of earning a living, of making a living – all these notions delimit a large field which is interested in the mechanisms through which agents go about sustaining themselves, their relatives and others.

Categories of decisions that induce specific ways of making a living for individuals living in poverty cover the vast realm of social and individual factors described in the previous chapter³⁶. Arguably, the different layers of the social environment, the micro-level structures, the individual cognition and the sub-groups to which agents belong all play a role in framing the decision pathways of agents living in poverty. The micro-geography of urban poverty³⁷ and the social dynamics at play in urban slum areas contribute to the shaping of specific values and norms followed by agents when attempting to make a living. Decision analysis has also gained the attention of academics in the field of development studies over the past ten years, as economists and behavioural economists have begun to investigate the effects of poverty on individual cognition, and to some extent on livelihood strategies³⁸. Finally, group membership theories have been adapted to poverty contexts by economists such as Durlauf and Bowles, who have explored the effects of sharing similar socio-economic characteristics on the perpetuation of poverty (in particular membership poverty traps).

Living in poverty has various meanings, for different populations and in different contexts. Most of the economic literature has dealt with monetary resources as a standard definition of poverty. Ravallion (1998) and Atkinson and Bourguignon (2000) have explored and conceptualised the income poverty paradigm, defining poverty as the non-achievement of a certain standard of living expressed in a money metric. Nonetheless the state of well-being associated with a measurement of income or consumption does not encompass one's ability to enjoy a certain income or consumption level, due to different social assets, different human capitals, different health statuses or handicaps, different abilities and skills or different degrees of discrimination in accessing market opportunities, goods and services. Various alternative definitions of poverty, capturing the different dimensions of what makes a person poor or deprived, have been explored in the past decades. The objective of this research is not to discuss or reach an agreement over a specific definition of poverty. However its various dimensions are

³⁶ Refer to Chapter 1, more specifically to 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6.

³⁷ The micro-geography of poverty is discussed in 2.2. It is argued that the spatial dimensions of poverty are an important aspect when exploring the social factors at play in a slum area.

³⁸ Specific studies that explore the relationship between individual cognition and strategies in situations of poverty are discussed in 2.1.

explored in relation to decision pathways and the ways in which material deprivation, monetary poverty, lack of human and social capital, but also subjective poverty interact with decision-making processes are all considered as part of the research, thereby favouring a multi-dimensional approach to poverty.

More specifically, this research is interested in aspects of urban poverty, in relation to their influence on decision pathways related to making a living. The greater influence of commoditisation, reliance on the cash economy (Wratten 1995; Satterthwaite 1997), overcrowded living conditions in low income urban areas, environmental hazards due to density and location of urban settlements, social fragmentation, lack of inter-household solidarity mechanisms and safety net compared to rural areas – all of these factors tend to characterise urban poverty³⁹. Social diversity in urban contexts is likely to create tensions and the social fragmentation of interactions (Wratten 1995; Rakodi 1993) compared to rural contexts. Also, as cities are specific hubs for economic opportunities (Harris 1992), urban areas tend to trigger a more intense competition in terms of access to opportunities and resources compared to rural areas, urban areas being conditioned by the detention of cash income. The degree of marketisation of goods such as food, clothes and rent also entails higher expenses compared to rural areas (Wratten 1995). With respect to slum areas, urban poverty forms tend to create geographically bounded areas of poverty, in which access to basic services is low and creates situations of exclusion from other urban areas.

Making a living is a similarly wide concept, covering different types of activities carried out by agents varying according to circumstances⁴⁰. In basic terms, making a living equates to earning enough to support oneself or one's family. The meanings of 'supporting oneself' are nevertheless varied and range from basic survival (food and clothing for instance) to a broader sense of needs fulfilment (adequate housing, conformity with others' ways of living, or acceptance within a community). Definitions also vary as to whether living strategies are limited to income-earning strategies or whether they encompass additional activities such as domestic chores. In this chapter, a discussion of different ways of making a living is presented with the objective of framing one's understanding of the concept. Although income-generating strategies are central to agents' living strategies, the definition of the concept is left open for the analysis to inform the conceptual framework, that is, that individuals' own explanations of how they make a living are accounted for (e.g. from basic survival to a broader sense of fulfilment). The term 'livelihoods' is also used in this chapter, as it is assumed for the purpose of the research that ways of making a living incorporate the components identified in the Urban Livelihood Approach proposed by Moser (1998) and Beall (1999). Nonetheless, the difference between 'livelihood' and 'making a living' is clearly acknowledged throughout the research – and the use of the term 'livelihoods' should not be mistaken with the narrower definition given as part of the Livelihood Approach.

³⁹ It is important to note that the characteristics of urban poverty may or may not result in factors affecting decision-making processes. This chapter therefore attempts to first describe the salient characteristics of poverty environments, before delving into the nature of the interaction between these characteristics and the urban poor's decisional processes.

⁴⁰ Refer to 2.3 for a detailed discussion of the notion of 'making a living'.

While the literature relating to poverty, urban poverty, making a living, survival, choices and decisions encompasses a wide range of perspectives on these topics, the purpose of this chapter is to present the most recent findings from behavioural research relating to decisional processes in poverty situations. Building upon the theoretical review of decisions and decision-making processes from the previous chapter, this chapter completes the conceptual framework used for the purpose of this research by adding the perspective of poverty into the investigation of ways in which agents make decisions.

2.1 Decision-making processes in poverty contexts: Do they differ?

Decisions in poverty constrained environments

The theorisation of poverty falls under different categories as one explores it from the perspective of behaviourism. One camp regards poor individuals' behaviours as a calculated adaptation based on a comprehensive assessment of circumstances, while a second camp attributes deviant values, misguided choices and 'irrational' behaviours⁴¹ to individuals – as products of the '*culture of poverty*' (Lewis 1959; Frazier 1948). In line with behaviourist theories, a third view emerged as neither grounded in purely rational decision-making nor psychologically 'deviant' values, but emphasising the behavioural patterns of the poor as showing biases similar to any other individuals, except that poverty situations present a smaller room for manoeuvre and narrower margins for error, thereby leading to worse outcomes in the case of inadequate decisions.

Contrary to Lewis' view that poor individuals were developing a '*culture of poverty*' entailing psychological limitations and biases (Lewis 1959), Banerjee (2000) explained that behaviours were subjected to the influence of poverty, suggesting that poverty could act as a limitation for people to follow their personal objectives (Orwell 1937; Scott 1977). More recently, Bertrand (2004) argued that there was a gap to fill in exploring the interactions between behavioural decision-making and poverty. Mullainathan (2010) added the idea of depletion and behavioural control, providing evidence that individuals' behaviour differ in predictable ways from the rational choice model⁴², which, according to his findings, is also the case for individuals experiencing extreme situations of poverty. This implies that individuals in poverty situations are not endowed with 'less rationality' or common sense than any other agent, but that deliberation⁴³ (or considerations over a set of alternatives) may be even more acute in poverty context due to the low margin of error and the irreversibility of consequences (Banerjee and Mullainathan 2010). Conflicting situations, preferences for the present due to expectation of hard times in the future imply different strategies and behaviours, while scarcity of resources and livelihoods subjected to pressures and shocks are additional constraints. It is therefore hypothesised as part of this research that, if the distribution of behaviours could be graphed as a normal distribution, the lower ends of

⁴¹ Refer to Chapter 1 for a discussion of the rationality or the irrationality of behaviours.

⁴² As explained in Chapter 1, Rational Choice Theory is a framework for understanding and formally modelling social and economic behaviours. Mullainathan (2010) demonstrated that choices deemed as 'irrational' from the perspective of Rational Choice Theory could also be theorised as a model, therefore providing evidence of the existence of recurrent patterns in the 'irrationality' of behaviours.

⁴³ Refer to 1.1. The 'phase of deliberation' is a concept borrowed from Aristotle (Allan 1953).

the bell curve would represent the limited room for manoeuvre in testing behaviours individuals in situations of poverty find themselves compared to other individuals. The aspects of decisions taking place 'at the margin' may therefore imply different outcomes resulting from the deliberation phase, as a result of the decision environment (i.e. situations of poverty) in which agents make their choices⁴⁴.

Individual cognition and behavioural poverty traps

The meaning given to 'situations of poverty', a term used throughout this research, benefits from being placed in the framework of persisting poverty⁴⁵. Persistent or chronic poverty is a condition implying multidimensional processes, resulting in the incapacity to meet basic needs over long periods (Jalan and Ravallion 1998; Layte and Fouarge 2004; Biewen 2003; Duncan 1993). The persistence of poverty has been explained in different bodies of literature, as part of the paradigm of poverty traps – persistent poverty being driven by cumulative causation, lock-in devices and path dependence, resulting in chronic patterns of poverty and perpetuation of poverty across generations. The concept of a poverty trap was developed following different theoretical reflections on closely related concepts such as irreversibility, path dependence, increasing returns, feedback processes and multiple equilibriums. As the first models were dealing with economic stagnation issues, the concepts of multiple equilibriums and 'traps' were explored at the country level, where the interaction of economic forces and historical events influenced the selection of an equilibrium over a set of equilibriums (Arthur 1989). Later on, Arthur (1994) developed the idea of locking-in mental models and beliefs, arguing that agents practiced inductive reasoning and were subjected to bounded rationality which could have consequences on poverty traps at the individual level. As a result, a set of behavioural constraints could be an element of its own in the unpacking of decisions and persistent poverty, as explained further on in this section.

Two important concepts in the literature around micro-level poverty traps⁴⁶ inform the processes behind attitudes, dispositions and intentions towards choosing certain livelihoods: neighbourhood traps, which are poverty traps with a spatial dimension (interdependence of behaviour and self-reinforcing processes due to limited supply of public goods, creating enclaves and reproduction of poverty (Durlauf 2003)), and membership traps, which convey the idea that the poor are influenced by choices of others, due to feedback loops from past choices projected on future choices (Blume and Durlauf 2000). Group membership relates to the attributes, beliefs that individuals associate with themselves and other members of a social group, which can lead

⁴⁴ In other words, it is hypothesised here that the decision environment is the main driver of the differences in decision-making processes between situations of poverty and other situations. As such, based on the existing research to date, it is assumed that the decisional mechanisms leading to a choice are not different from the mechanisms affecting decisions for any other individual.

⁴⁵ Caution should apply as to the stand taken as part of this doctoral thesis with respect to poverty and its definition. As explained in the introduction of Chapter 2, the objective of this research is not to discuss or reach an agreement over a specific definition of poverty. The reference to persistent poverty is used here as chronic and persisting poverty tend to characterise the situations of the slum dwellers studied in this research. I nevertheless do not assess whether or not the Thapathali case study refers to a community subjected to persistent poverty. The research did not set to seek or present evidence as to this particular field, although poverty – both objective and subjective poverty – is extensively discussed as part of the findings. Refer to Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of poverty measurements used in this research, supporting the aspects of the discussion around poverty.

⁴⁶ 'Micro-level' is used here to differentiate individual or community-level poverty traps from country-level types of poverty traps.

to the normative construction of low aspirations and stigma, having inhibiting effects on individuals. Poverty traps may therefore result from multiple dynamic equilibriums ('*fractal poverty traps*'; Barrett and Swallow 2006) taking place at the micro-level (households, individuals), meso-level (social group, networks, geography) and macro-level (economy, governance, public policies) – in which *behavioural poverty traps* operate at the interface between *micro- and meso-level poverty traps*, establishing linkages between the work of smaller units such as urban households or communities and large scale economic, social and political processes operating at the city level⁴⁷.

Poverty traps, as depicted in the existing literature, are also *cognitive traps*, as explained by Egidi and Narduzzo (1997): norms, on the one hand, and psychological states, representations and routines on the other hand, are mutually reinforcing and may generate poverty traps, as learning processes are costly for individuals and become ever more costly as beliefs stabilise. Denzau and North (1994) pointed out the role of mental models and behavioural rules as key factors of path-dependency. Bowles (2006), along with Hoff (2005), found that transition away from the equilibrium norm was unlikely and that kinship systems could be explored more in-depth in order to explain persistent poverty.

Embedding poverty in the conceptual framework

It follows that this research approaches decisional processes in poverty situations from a three-staged perspective. The later sections of this chapter (2.2, 2.3 and 2.4) address the current debates in the literature in relation to these three perspectives.

First and foremost, it is assumed that the micro-geography of urban poverty and the social dynamics at play in urban slum areas shape the specific values and norms followed by agents when attempting to make a living. Through a shared knowledge of the geographic location of opportunities, transportation costs, access to basic amenities, land tenure and local administrations, agents identify themselves as belonging to a social group facing similar obstacles to making a living. The extent to which obstacles to opportunities are perceived may vary for different agents of the same social group; however, the existence of micro-level structures shaped by similar living conditions entails a certain degree of constraint in accessing opportunities in the city. For instance, the squatting identity of agents forces them to develop strategies for making a living that exclude employment opportunities for which a formal address is required. A collective belief around the inability of squatters to access regular and secured forms of employment may prevent all agents within the social groups to even consider this type of employment opportunity. Poverty also entails that agents may not be able to afford transportation costs to faraway places in the city, preventing most agents living in the slum area to expand the area where to investigate for ways of making a living. Some agents may benefit from the possession of a bicycle, or from the support of external networks of acquaintances/ family members in other part of the city, which means that the constraints resulting from living in a slum area may affect agents in different ways, within the spectrum of opportunities accessible by all agents in a poverty situation.

⁴⁷ This point is of particular importance for this research. Decision-making processes are often viewed from the sole perspective of agents and their immediate social group, although wider dynamics (at meso- and macro-levels) are often at play and tend to affect the decision environment. This view also relates to De Haan (2005)'s multi-level localism or supra-local level (refer to 4.4 in Chapter 4).

Secondly, it is assumed based on existing research that the effects of poverty on individual cognition, and to some extent on livelihood strategies, result in decisions about ways of making a living that take place within a different 'mind-set' for agents living in poverty. The intervention of subjective norms in the decision process such as the influence of others' behaviours entails a different approach to risk-taking for agents. For instance agents living in poverty may be less likely to differentiate their strategies from other members of the social group, as they may face discrimination and limited support from other agents as they attempt to go about more risky ways of making a living⁴⁸. Self-employment may be a good example of differentiated strategies whereby agents attempt to produce, retail and sell goods that do not fall under the usual categories of small-scale businesses run by other slum dwellers. Risk-taking is likely to be less valued within a social group in a situation of poverty as agents have limited margin for error in choosing a way of making a living. Attempts to maintain a sense of homogeneity within the social group, preferences for the present due to expectations of hard times in the future, the crucial importance of ensuring support from local networks and membership in locally organised safety nets may therefore all play a role in the ways agents grasp and interpret the available room for manoeuvre when deciding for one way of making a living over another.

The third stage through which decisional processes are affected in poverty situations relates to the existence of sub-groups within the slum community. The sharing of similar socio-economic characteristics may result in the existence of differentiated groups to which agents belong that shape the ways in which agents go about their ways of making a living. Micro-level structures – social structures, institutions, norms and beliefs that influence others' behaviours – also imply the potential existence of interactions between norms for agents belonging to different sub-groups, entailing a distinction between an overall 'others' behaviours' and 'different others' behaviours'. Group membership in situations of poverty is related to a collectively shared habitus and may imply a stronger sense of solidarity and self-help among members of the group than for higher income groups. Power structures between different groups, whether ethnic groups, religious groups, relatively healthier groups or groups sharing a similar occupation, may also encourage the uptake of one way of making a living over another.

2.2 Micro-geography of urban poverty: The case of slum areas

Making a living in urban areas has specific implications when poverty is considered from the perspective of the agent and his/her urban environment. The geographic location of opportunities, transportation costs, access to basic amenities, land tenure and local administrations are subjecting the 'livelihood' system in urban slum areas to increasing pressures and shocks compared to rural areas. Trade-offs and contextual determinants of the ability to seize opportunities are informed by macroeconomic dynamics, as economic opportunities, manufacturing jobs, public sector employment and characteristics of the informal sector are likely to provide different types of livelihoods (Potter and Lloyd 1998). Institutions and governance relate

⁴⁸ The extent to which the idea of 'conformity' plays a role in the establishment of strategies relates to the discussion around achieving basic needs versus fulfilling one's needs within the boundaries of acceptance within a social group. This aspect is discussed as part of the presentation of findings in Chapters 5 and 6.

to infrastructure and basic amenities, the delivering of which conditions the lives of the poor and their resulting strategies. Civil society organisations also play a role in the shaping of livelihoods. Natural environment and related health issues have an impact on access to livelihoods, while trade-offs can arise in terms of being located nearby potential livelihoods versus suffering from detrimental living conditions. In addition, inter-linkages between rural and urban areas for slum dwellers make ways of making a living more difficult to analyse, as remittances, seasonal labour and short term migration have a non-negligible influence on strategies adopted.

Slum areas are specific geographical areas of study. In academic and policy circles, the poverty of slum areas is discussed with a focus on geographic conditions and density factors, as slums are defined as concentrated areas of low-income populations characterised by sub-standard housing (UN-Habitat 2003). The definition of slum areas also extends to illegally occupied settlements, encompassing another aspect of poverty relating to the inability to access the formal housing market⁴⁹.

The spatial dimensions of poverty are an important aspect when exploring the social factors at play in a slum area. As concentrated areas of low-income households, slums are regarded as geographically delimited areas where spatial inequality can be observed compared to the rest of the city. According to Grant (2010), inequality, in spatial terms, is based on physical proximity to services, infrastructure and jobs. Differences between low-income areas and wealthier areas in a city are closely related to *"the development over time of distinct areas of urban deprivation that undermines the benefits of physical proximity that urban residence may offer"* (Grant 2010: 5). As far as the spatial aspects of poverty can be examined, neighbourhood effects should therefore be explored as part of a comprehensive framework weaving in geographical aspects to social relations and chronic poverty.

Tenure insecurity

Spatial concentration of low-income households frequently occurs in areas where the housing market is more affordable or in areas where residential occupation of land is illegal. Low-income housing is often characterised by insecurity of tenure and absence of or low standard infrastructure and services. In terms of its manifestations, 'informal' housing (i.e. occupying land illegally) encompasses important regional and local diversity in developing countries. Informal settlements are namely defined by their land tenure status, or absence of status (Tsenkova 2009), and forms of informal housing have been largely explored in relation to the forces generating these settlements. Payne (1989), Satterthwaite (1989), Arche (1992) and Kombe and Kreibich (2000) have produced studies from diverging academic standpoints – geography, urban planning, sociology, political economy, architecture and anthropology. Interestingly, some aspects of informal housing emerged as central and revealed misconceptions regarding how

⁴⁹ It is important to distinguish between slum areas and squatter areas. Slum areas are primarily characterised by sub-standard housing (e.g. degraded old planned urban areas), inhabited by populations who typically own or rent their homes from legal owners. By contrast, squatter areas are illegally occupied (e.g. 'squats' or unplanned informal settlements), implying that occupants or tenants do not own the land nor the dwellings. Based on these definitions, the Thapathali settlement can be classified as a squatter area, that is, an area *illegally* inhabited by its occupants. Nonetheless, in this thesis, Thapathali inhabitants are referred to as 'slum dwellers' rather than 'squatters', to avoid the negative connotation associated with the term 'squatter'. Furthermore, the term 'slum' has been most commonly used to describe indistinctively both slum areas and squatter areas. The specific status of the Thapathali settlement area is further discussed in Chapter 4.

illegality had been established as a central pillar of housing informality. According to Gelderblom (1994), squatting can be defined as "*the unsanctioned and illegal use of land or dwellings belonging to other parties for shelter*" (Gelderblom 1994: 277) that differs widely according to local representations. Whereas the 'illegality' aspect of informality plays a role in most informal housing area designations, the phenomena of self-produced housing and squatting encompass different meanings on the 'irregularity'/'illegality' spectrum⁵⁰. In recent decades, urban land tenure has fallen beyond the traditional legal/illegal or formal/informal dichotomy, as suggested by 1) settlements lacking any legal status in which large populations have lived securely for several decades, versus 2) neighbourhoods in which formal titles do not guarantee protection from eviction. Ownership and occupancy legitimacy therefore take different meanings, with property rights ranging from *de facto* to *de jure* rights along a spectrum.

Forms of informal housing therefore tend to influence land ownership debates in various ways as *ownership* is increasingly shaped by both formal and informal rules. Social meanings related to housing and ownership are being embedded in social roots which are difficult to disentangle from informal housing production. The notion of 'choice' urban dwellers exercise in opting for one form of residence over another has been questioned by Gilbert and Varley (1991), acknowledging the idea that forms of informal housing conveyed crucial information related to life-cycle related decisions, migration trends and drivers, and local representations related to informality, the right to the city space and the influence of social status over perceptions of illegal occupation.

Spatial poverty traps

Geographically bounded areas of poverty are therefore pockets of poverty existing in particular locations where several dynamics are at play. In addition to informal housing aspects, slum areas have been studied as urban spatial poverty traps, suggesting that individuals living in one area experience similar living conditions, opportunities and vulnerability factors. Based on geographical factors, an area is considered as a spatial poverty trap when the majority of its inhabitants have difficulties sustaining their living mainly due the limited availability of local resources. Spatial poverty traps appear alongside rapid urban growth due to differences in geographical endowment, access to infrastructure and markets in a growing city, and also as a result of government policies that influence the distribution of resources or migration policies. By nature, urban centres attract residents who wish to live closer to markets and services, as well as employment opportunities. Spatial urban poverty traps are therefore characterised by various degrees of access to urban centres, but not only, if ones consider opportunities to be more or less accessible by most urban residents (e.g. through transports). Importantly, another dimension of spatial urban poverty lies in the nature of the "*power relationships that mediate access to employment opportunities, markets and services*" (Grant 2010: 1). As a result, beyond physical proximity and differentiated degrees of inclusion/ exclusion, the interactions and mechanisms that produce pockets of urban poverty in a city are not only geographical but socially-built.

⁵⁰ This point is extensively discussed as part of Chapter 4.

Economic interactions are dictated by access to different parts of the city and livelihoods are often established in relation to the immediate environment accessible to the poor (e.g. nearby crossroads for street vending activities). Nonetheless, according to Giddens (2006), cities in developing countries are increasingly reaching the model of 'global cities', as growing urban centres become an opportunity for developing countries to promote their economic development and expand to new emerging markets. Some urban areas are affected by rising inequalities not solely in terms of their geographical aspects but also in relation to the ways in which strategic employment opportunities can be accessed by different groups of urban residents. As such, the opportunities offered by urban centres to the poor are emerging from a range of processes, whereby local livelihoods are interconnected to nationally and internationally driven demand on the labour market to a variable extent (De Haan 2005)⁵¹. For instance, the rise of the service sector in large cities is driven in part by the demand for domestic workers from middle and high income households, which results in the creation of local employment opportunities for the low income groups who cannot access other types of employment.

These trends affect the shaping of livelihoods in areas populated by low income households to the extent that a simultaneous tendency towards the urbanisation of poverty is taking place. Attracted by urban opportunities or pushed outside of rural areas by other socio-economic factors, the rural poor are more likely to decide to move to cities than the rest of the population (Ravallion 2007), resulting in densified poor areas – in city spaces where housing can be afforded by migrant households. Spatial concentration of poverty therefore emerges as a result of a combination of factors that attract low income groups to settle in a particular neighbourhood where they know they will be able to afford rent and daily goods, but also as a result of the reinforcing effects of low quality infrastructures (or lack of) on poverty and the difficulty to access the relevant networks of opportunities due to the stigma and the power structures prevailing in the urban market structure. As such, the emergence of spatial poverty traps in the city space cannot solely be attributed to the initial lack of endowments of rural migrant populations (since *“it is not always the poorest rural people who migrate to urban areas: it can be those who have some means to move (e.g. social connections, aspirations, money for transport)”*; Grant 2010: 2), but may find its explanation in the geography of 'centrality' and 'marginality' that result from poverty coexisting alongside wealthier urban groups in the urban space (Giddens 2006) – whereby the rural poor are maintained outside the relevant groups or networks that could grant them access to urban opportunities (employment, housing, education). According to Mitlin (2005), the parallel living system that migrants find themselves subjected to is maintained through the low incomes received by 'marginalised' populations, who struggle to access basic goods and secure long-term survival situations, in spite of the fact that these 'marginalised' populations are subjected to the costs of urban living (rent, electricity, water, food, clothing, transport and health) the same way that other urban groups are.

Geographical constraints, urban power structures and households' decisions

In line with the views from Grant (2010) that a crucial dimension of spatial urban poverty lies in the nature of the *“power relationships that mediate access to employment opportunities,*

⁵¹ This view relates to De Haan (2005)'s multi-level localism or supra-local level (refer to 4.4 in Chapter 4).

markets and services" (Grant 2010: 1), the urbanisation of poverty related to the migration of the rural poor to urban areas entails sharper inequalities among urban groups, that is accompanied by the strengthening of structures of economic and social difference whereby poverty is legitimised and perpetuated through these structures that shape access to goods, services and opportunities in the urban fabric (Tilly 1999).

According to Azevedo and Robles, *"several factors might account for the persistence of poverty, reinforcing the poverty "traps", including geographic conditions. To better understand the occurrence of geographic poverty traps, one needs to consider its occurrence along with households' decisions, such as the choice to live in a poor neighbourhood"* (Azevedo and Robles 2010: 2). Among the several factors mentioned by Azevedo and Robles, geographic conditions are crucial but not solely responsible for the poverty of households who choose to live in poorly endowed urban areas. On the contrary, if geographic conditions, lack of infrastructure and access to urban opportunities were to be solely responsible for the poverty of households moving to such areas, one could assume that in a situation of perfect household geographical mobility (i.e. absence of constraints), households would choose to move to more productive areas where they can secure higher incomes.

Geographic conditions and the occurrence of poverty traps in urban areas therefore entail the existence of additional factors – identified by Azevedo and Robles (2010) as (1) economically significant relocation costs (as the relative costs of moving can be extremely high for poorer households), (2) informational asymmetries (that prevent households from moving from poor areas to higher income areas), (3) high relative prices for transportation, housing, and food (faced by households in higher-income areas) and (4) the cultural barriers in other urban areas that could hinder the effectiveness of *"risk sharing and social protection networks [provided] within poorer communities"* (Azevedo and Robles 2010: 2). As such, the specific case of urban poverty traps and slum areas is explored as part of this research using a multidimensional approach to the occurrence of poverty concentration effects – addressing the geographical constraints faced by households, the absence of perfect household geographical mobility, the urban power structures affecting households' access to opportunities and better living conditions, and the internalisation of such social structures in the processes through which agents make decisions about their ways of making a living.

2.3 Notions of 'making a living'

Similarly, decision-making processes related to making a living are governed by several dimensions, among which social relations, institutions and market opportunities are important explanatory variables. The livelihood-poverty nexus has been explored through the structural mechanisms reinforcing the causal relationship between livelihood opportunities and the persistence of poverty: education, access to basic amenities, work opportunities, social network, informality, geography and transport, institutions and governance (Moser 1998; Beall and Kanji 1999). However, in discussing the barriers to livelihood opportunities, the occurrence of recurrent structural mechanisms leads to questioning the importance of behaviours (the 'room for

manoeuvre'), both strategic and unintentional, which occur under a set of structural constraints to making a living (De Haan 2005).

Livelihood strategies comprise the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Chambers 1995), involving both tangible and immaterial assets which result in a variety of strategies. Although paid employment can be one important element, other strategies involve a wide array of assets, comprising for instance social networks, or institutions providing household support and access to basic amenities (de Haan 1997; Dersham and Gzirishvili 1998; Douglass 1998). Depicted as household centred analyses, livelihood studies comprise the idea that decisions and strategies are put in place at the level of the household (Moser 1998; Beall and Kanji 1999), despite each individual member of a household contributing and benefiting from livelihood strategies in different ways (Friedman 1996). As poor households interact with social, economic and institutional environments, they respond to available opportunities and related stresses and shocks affecting the context (Moser 1996; Chambers 1995). Changing circumstances, new policies or market conditions, shocks and pressures on assets have an impact on the portfolio of resources and opportunities the poor make use of (Singh and Titi 1994).

In view of the existing literature, livelihoods therefore uncover a wide range of strategies put in place by agents to sustain themselves, in relation to the socio-economic environment (and its constraints) to which they belong. Decision pathways may be affected by multiple factors – at the individual level, the group level and the wider socio-economic environment level, therefore requiring a holistic approach to the different notions of making a living.

Making a living

'Making a living' is a similarly wide concept (compared to 'livelihoods'), covering different types of activities carried out by agents varying according to circumstances. In basic terms, making a living equates to earning enough to support oneself. As mentioned earlier, the meanings of 'supporting oneself' are varied and range from basic survival (food and clothing for instance) to a broader sense of needs fulfilment (adequate housing, conformity with others' ways of living, or acceptance within a community). As such, it is argued as part of this research that the definition of the concept of 'supporting oneself' should be left open, that is, that individuals' own interpretations of what 'making a living' means are accounted for (e.g. from basic survival to a broader sense of fulfilment). Additional insights from the existing literature are presented below.

Long (1997) underlines a significant difference between livelihoods and ways of making a living, as agents striving to 'make a living' are described by Long (1997: 11) as "*individuals or groups (...) attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions*" – suggesting that the understanding of 'making' a living encompasses more than the economic or material objectives of a livelihood. As such, the approach taken for the purpose of this research strongly relates to Wallmann's views that making a living "*is never just a matter of finding or making shelter, transacting money, getting food to put on the family table or to exchange on the market place. It is equally a matter of ownership and circulation of information, the management of skills and relationships and the affirmation of personal significance... and group identity. The*

tasks of meeting obligations, of security, identity and status, and organising time are as crucial to livelihood as bread and shelter" (Wallmann 1984; in Appendini 2001: 25). While material aspects of livelihoods are non-negligible in terms of the extent to which individuals and groups achieve the goals defined by Wallmann, Bebbington (1999) adds,

A person's assets, such as land, are not merely means with which he or she makes a living: they also give meaning to that person's world. Assets are not simply resources that people use in building livelihoods: they are assets that give them the capability to be and to act. Assets should not be understood only as things that allow survival, adaptation and poverty alleviation: they are also the basis of agents' power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources.

(Bebbington 1999: 2022)

Beyond livelihoods and earning activities

Appendini (2001) criticises the limitations of the livelihoods approach, reminding researchers that the primary objective of this approach was *"to search for more effective methods to support people and communities in ways that are more meaningful to their daily lives and needs, as opposed to ready-made, interventionist instruments"* (Appendini 2001: 24; emphasis added). As such, an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms at play behind the ways in which agents make sense of the wider socio-economic and political processes that operate at local levels is required in order to understand the decisional processes behind 'making a living', and not simply the earning activities carried out by agents – the study of which may shift the focus away from aspects of making a living such as locally organised forms of social security or context-specific forms of needs (Ahmad 1991).

Another important aspect related to context-specific forms of needs lies in the discussion around the conformity of the strategies used by agents to organise their survival. As such, what had been described as a broader sense of needs fulfilment⁵² (conformity with others' ways of living, acceptance within a community) may not be in direct opposition⁵³ to the fulfilment of basic needs such as food and clothing – if the fulfilment of these basic needs is driven by the pre-requisite of conforming with others' way of securing food and clothing. Furthermore, illegal activities such as selling drugs, stealing or engaging in prostitution⁵⁴ can be described as strategies that can ensure one's satisfaction of basic needs, but that would jeopardise one's acceptance within a community. More broadly (and not only with regards to 'illegal activities'), it seems that the necessity of conformity, beyond basic survival, is crucial for one's livelihood strategy. Norms perpetuate and coordinate behaviours through the repetition of types of behaviours that are deemed acceptable by a social group. As such, various payoffs coexist and dictate the extent to which conformity minimises the risk of deviant behaviours and sanctions⁵⁵.

⁵² Refer to the introduction of Chapter 2.

⁵³ Or only subsequent to.

⁵⁴ These three types of illegal activities were more specifically mentioned by respondents in the Thapathali community, and appear as recurrent forms of 'informal' or 'immoral' activities mentioned in the literature around livelihood strategies.

⁵⁵ Refer to 1.5 in Chapter 1.

Making a living: Roles and functions within the household

Roles and functions within the household tend to be shaped by the earning potential of each individual household member, which, based on the existing literature, appears to define the power structures within the household unit. According to Schmink (1984: 87), *"in response to the opportunities and constraints defined by broad historical and structural processes, the domestic unit is conceived of as mediating a varied set of behaviours (for example, labour force participation, consumption patterns, and migration) that are themselves conditioned by the particular makeup of this most basic economic entity"*.

Nevertheless, the household should not be viewed from the sole perspective of micro-economics, as major shortcomings to this approach were identified. According to Guyer and Peters (1987: 209), *"the socially specific units that approximate 'households' are best typified not merely as clusters of task-oriented activities that are organised in variable ways, not merely as places to live/eat/work/reproduce, but as sources of identity and social markers. They are located in structures of cultural meaning and differential power"*. The ways in which households coordinate to make a living across the range of household members are influenced by gender aspects for instance, which are emphasised by the importance of intra-household differences between male and female household members. Different household members are believed to pursue different goals, have different interests and hold different beliefs. In addition to the heterogeneity in interests, *"the concept of (...) strategy can lose its meaning to the extent that it becomes a mere functionalist label applied ex post to whatever behaviour is found"* (Schmink 1984: 95). This entails that household members may well be constantly weighing different objectives, opportunities and limitations in response to external and internal circumstances that change over time, but that the household behaviour as a whole may not be as strategic as it appears: strategies at the household level may therefore be regarded as ex-post, uncoordinated strategies (Devereux 2001).

Therefore, and importantly for this research, there may not be any apparent coherent decision-making at the household level, due to differences in interests, roles and functions of each household member in the diversification of activities. According to Ellis (2000), the poor tend to be engaged in complex, multi-activity income generation for survival more than other groups, and poverty situations are conducive to an intensification in the use of available capitals and capacities of each individual. Nevertheless, the concept of a 'household strategy' can be questioned to the extent that household members may rather unconsciously opt for an activity or another as a living strategy – revealing both the existence of mechanisms of coordination and the absence of an overarching strategy at the level of the household. A crucial example can be found in the division of labour occurring at the household level, by which some household members engage in domestic activities and household chores while other members of the household focus on income-generating activities. Both types of activities belong to the notion of 'making a living', which, as demonstrated in this section, should encompass the various and sometimes competing aspects of individual interests, household goals and context-specific meanings of social status and group identity.

2.4 Livelihood pathways and the inheritance of occupations

Livelihood strategies versus livelihood pathways

Interestingly, Arce and Hebinck (2002) developed a similarly relevant concept to investigate the ways of making a living – the concept of ‘style’ – in order to explore the ways and pathways for making a living followed by groups, and not only by individuals. According to Arce and Hebinck, *“a focus on organisational practices might take the livelihood framework beyond the unit of analysis of individual strategies”* (Arce and Hebinck 2002: 7), suggesting that the specific cultural environment of a group, consisting in shared beliefs, past experiences, knowledge and similar interests, leads to the framing of a ‘style’ that integrates groups’ interpretations of markets, technology, policies and institutions. Understood as a group feature, styles are further defined by Nooteboom as *“distinguishable patterns of orientations and action concerning the variety of means to achieve security; these patterns are structured by an internal logic and conditioned by social, economic and personal characteristics of people involved”* (Nooteboom 2003: 54).

The literature therefore suggests that ways of making a living are fluid and dynamic by nature, regulated by statuses, social relations and institutions. This suggests that livelihood ‘pathways’ are under the influence of both *“long-term practices and institutions on the one hand and individual strategic choices on the other”* (Nooteboom 2003: 55). As such, the strategic intent of agents’ behaviours is recognised as having its own importance: agents’ behaviours are perceived as being framed by (1) structural constraints but also (2) the repertoire of shared beliefs, past experiences, knowledge and similar interests that constitutes the practices and rules that agents should follow within their groups. This approach informs the decision in this research to employ Bourdieu’s concept of habitus⁵⁶, whereby a system of acquired social dispositions defining social statuses and rules influences the ways in which agents approach new situations in light of the past experiences and practices of their group – and subsequently generate new rules and practices through the logic of practice (Bourdieu 1980). As explained by De Haan (2005),

On the one hand, patterns in livelihood arise because persons of the same social class, gender or caste have similar dispositions and face similar life opportunities, expectations of others etc., resulting in a livelihood typical of their group. In so doing they develop a particular habitus, which distinguishes them from others. On the other hand, adaptation of habitus may take place and life trajectories may occur in which actors change social position. Thus, actors with different dispositions at the start may ultimately develop the same, successful livelihoods. However, although the result may be the same, the pathway was different, and it is the pathway that shapes the habitus.

(De Haan 2005: 41)

For these reasons, pathways should not be confused with strategies. According to De Bruijn and Van Dijk (2003: 1-2), *“a pathway is different from a strategy, because a pathway needs*

⁵⁶ Refer to 1.7 in Chapter 1.

not to be a device to attain a pre-set goal which is set after a process of conscious and rational weighing of the actor's preferences. Rather it arises out of an iterative process in which in a step-by-step procedure goals, preferences, resources and means are constantly reassessed in view of new unstable conditions". The research therefore approaches the study of livelihoods from the perspective of re-constructing the pathways followed by agents⁵⁷: while strategic intent may be key in agents' decisional process, the repertoire of shared beliefs, past experiences, knowledge and similar interests are seen as equally important factors in the iterative process that leads agents to opt for one way of making a living over another⁵⁸.

The existence of groups within the social group

While the ways of making a living can be approached from various angles, an important aspect remains the importance of group affiliation and group membership as part of the understanding of which livelihood 'model' or 'pathways' agents opt for. Livelihoods are organised based on individual interests, household goals and context-specific meanings of social status and group identity – which are strongly interrelated with one another and also through the existing degree of cooperation, coordination or conflict between actors. These are embedded within various arenas of power, which determine group affiliation. According to De Haan (2000: 352), *"they are rather groups of differing composition, which present themselves depending on the problem. Sometimes it is an occupational group, sometimes it is a status group like women or youths, sometimes it is a kinship group, sometimes a network of mutual assistance or clients of a patron, and sometimes a group of individuals with a common historical trajectory of livelihood strategies"*.

Consequently, in light of the literature around decision-making in situations of poverty presented in this chapter, groups such as occupational groups or kinship groups⁵⁹ may influence the livelihood pathways followed by agents. These agents, as part of what has been defined above as 'styles', can be seen as (1) agents with individual intentions and motivations while (2) their choices and behaviours remained framed and bounded by the existence of groups of interest that, to a certain extent, guide one's way of making a living.

The following chapter presents the specific research objectives that derive from the literature presented in **Chapters 1** and **2**, and outlines the methodology used for the research.

⁵⁷ It is important to note that both strategies and pathways are used in this thesis. The reader will find occurrences of both these terms. However, a clear distinction is made between strategic choices and choices resulting from the influence of the decision environment.

⁵⁸ As explained in Chapter 1, this research assumes a conception of social reality that places the individual agent as a central focus point (including aspects of his/her strategic intent) while being the primary unit whereby social phenomena are expressed and observable (including the influence of shared beliefs and other aspects of the decision environment). As such, it embeds a sociological approach to behaviours and incorporates a social angle to behavioural theories.

⁵⁹ More extensively, groups that constitute the different layers of the decision environment. Refer to 1.5.

3. Research objectives and methodology

The objective of the research is to provide an in-depth understanding of the decision-making patterns of actors subjected to the influence of the normative environment (norms and social representations), the influence of their own understanding of rational choice and decision-making (cognition) and the influence of their interpretation of 'normated' practices within the social group they belong to (group membership). This research therefore provides a refined understanding of behaviours, from the perspective of preferences and choices, but also of cognition and rationality of choice along with the influence of social norms and belief systems as shaped by social group dynamics at the level of a slum area.

Focusing on the workings of decision-making processes relating to making a living, the research proposes a methodology for investigating the decision environment and the extent to which socially-embedded individuals have opportunities for making a living within this environment. It therefore encompasses the formulation of an indicative methodology for *exploring* decision-making processes but also a tentative procedure for *testing* existing theories which currently lack empirical evidence in the field of decision-making. The research aims to produce and interpret evidence within the frameworks provided by social psychologist and behavioural theories, namely Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, and their embeddedness in constructivist sociological approaches (Bourdieu's Theory of Practice) applied to the slum area.

The wider objective of this study is to attempt to influence academics, policy makers, civil society organisations and social workers intervening in contexts of poverty, urban slums and low-skilled employment opportunities. By presenting a range of findings as to how norms and belief systems are incorporated in defining the decisions people make and how they 'arrange' (align or modify) their preferences relating to making a living, the outcomes of this study could inform how a wide range of actors try to answer questions in the fields of urban poverty and decision-making processes while leading to a more accurate use of concepts relating to making a living in urban slums.

The research methodology is presented as follows. Firstly, research questions are framed following the research objectives and define the specific scope of the research. Secondly, the research design is discussed in terms of its accuracy for answering the research questions. The rationale for using a theory-testing design and the rationale for the selection of the case study are explained from the perspective of the chosen slum area that provides the basis of the empirical research. The sources of data and analytical approach are presented, along with the sampling strategy used for data collection. Further methodological notes on weighting and triangulation with national data sources conclude this methodology chapter.

3.1 Research questions and research design

Research questions

While the first aspects to consider as part of the research were definitional and conceptual, the approach to the problem stated in the previous chapters is further explored under an organised set of research questions that inform the research design and research methodologies in the next stages.

The overarching question is:

In what ways does poverty affect decision-making for making a living?

Sub-research questions are as follows:

Research question 1

What are the micro-level structures that frame the normative environment (norms and social representations) in which agents make decisions?

Research question 2

How do these micro-level structures affect agents' decision-making pathways (cognition)?

Research question 3

In what ways does the practice of norms, at the level of sub-groups (group membership), influence the perpetuation of specific decision-making pathways?

Research hypotheses⁶⁰

It is hypothesised that social groups are ruled by norms and social representations, and that slum communities follow similar structuring patterns shaped through the interactions with wider urban dynamics. Decision pathways (information, criteria, type of rationality) at the level of a slum community can be identified through the perspective of micro-level structures which give reasons and meanings to decisions related to making a living made by agents. Agents are viewed as decision-makers operating within the space of recurrent and similar social constructs, and follow their visions of the social world to explain their choice of means of making a living. However, it is hypothesised that decisions are also influenced by the interplay of different groups within the slum community, the characteristics of which are expressed through socio-economic statuses, origin of migration, reasons for migration, religious affiliation and social network assets, which questions the extent to which actors have the room for manoeuvre for negotiating norms

⁶⁰ While the set of research hypotheses described here is fairly condensed, the hypotheses are stated in more details in Chapters 5 and 6, following the presentation of the case study in Chapter 4. Reasons for refining the research hypotheses later in the research process are explained in 'Methodology for investigating the case study' in 3.2.

and values when they elaborate strategies for making a living as members of socio-economically defined groups.

Research design

The research design approaches the study problem through the perspective of the 'why' question, and can be referred to as a theory testing design. A theory testing approach can be understood as an explanatory approach to the research problem; it begins with the presentation of a relevant set of theories, which are discussed and the different contributions of which are being presented under a conceptual framework; the later steps involve the design of research instruments to collect evidence. Therefore, the theory testing research design moves from the general to the particular, while the evidence collected provides the frame for testing the theoretical assumptions under consideration (particular to general). Deductive reasoning derives a set of propositions to be tested using (1) the phenomena as observed during the first stage of the investigation of the research problem, and (2) the predictions of the conceptual framework.

The investigation of causality is an important aspect of theory testing research designs. Causality study can be understood as the study of a set of phenomena similar to the approach taken with exploratory research, although causality understands the phenomena under investigation as conditional statements in the form of $X \rightarrow Y$. The test of hypotheses is therefore achieved through the search of causal explanations, using the measurement of phenomena in relation with the identified assumptions. The causal relationship exists when the variation in one phenomenon results in the variation of another phenomenon under a given set of assumptions. The research design chosen here therefore aims to frame the collection of evidence that is interpreted in light of social psychologist and behavioural theories, namely Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, and in light of constructivist sociological approaches (Bourdieu's Theory of Practice) applied to the slum area.

3.2 The slum area and rationale for selection

An important component of the research design relates to the decision to opt for a case study-based research method, aiming at gathering the appropriate evidence to be scrutinised from a theory-based perspective. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach are presented here with the objective of justifying the strategy for selecting the case study. Specific attention is given to the role of singular observations as part of the case study research, and how a diversity of approaches are being used to investigate the case under consideration – ranging from non-participant field observation to ethnographic research methods.

Rationale for the case study

The rationale for a case study as core research evidence of the research can be explained through the necessity of an in-depth study of the research problem, and the limited availability of researchable examples in which the research problem can be observed. The case study approach is used here in order to narrow down the field of research into a comprehensive case, in order to test a specific theory in a 'workable' and sizeable space – the geographically delimited slum area. The case study design is particularly useful in order to understand the

complex mechanisms of decision-making processes, thereby achieved through detailed contextual analysis of a delimited social space, affected by a researchable set of events and conditions.

The case of the Thapathali slum area in Kathmandu, Nepal, as all case studies, represents an unusual or unique problem for study⁶¹. This implies that (1) the *interpretation* of findings can only apply to this particular case and (2) the *generalisation* of findings may only be achieved through a cautious understanding of the patterns affecting the Thapathali slum area in light of other slum areas. As such, the evidence emerging from the research may unravel aspects of the conceptual framework that do not necessarily prove to be linked as stated in the framework, and these findings are partially related to the specific case under investigation but also partially related to the framework and its validity. A discussion of the elements of the case study that may be generalizable can be found at the end of this sub-section.

Brief contextualisation of the case study⁶²

The case of Nepal is particularly suited to exploring urban poverty in a slum setting, as the country has experienced one of the fastest spatial transitions in the recent years, characterised by rapid and concentrated urban growth coupled with increasing internal migration to its capital city, Kathmandu. Urbanisation dynamics of the Kathmandu Valley have followed different phases beginning in the 1970s. The valley is composed of three main cities, Kathmandu, Latipur and Bhaktapur, Kathmandu being the largest with over a million inhabitants. A large increase in population (half a million in 1970 to over 3 million in 2010) occurred during the past decades in the 600km² bowl-shaped valley, as rural migrants came looking for new opportunities nearby the capital city. This led to a denser urban fabric which gradually replaced agricultural activity in the Kathmandu Valley (an annual decline of 7.4 per cent between 1984 and 2000), creating an important divide between traditional and clustered villages and cities, where land prices increased considerably during the same period (Toffin 2007). As little planning intervention took place during the urbanisation process, the growth of sub-standard settlements has been largely detached from infrastructure provision logics, and inadequate water supply and sewage systems resulted in some urban areas lagging far behind others in terms of economic development.

Migration patterns have a large influence on demographic growth in the Kathmandu Valley, which reached over 4 per cent per year in 2013. Immigration dynamics are from different regions of Nepal, mainly the rural regions, and also from Northern India. Among migration drivers is the fact Kathmandu concentrates economic opportunities, political power, and also a large part of the tourist industry, creating further employment opportunities. Other drivers of migration involve large movements of internally displaced people due to the Maoist insurgency which lasted from 1996 to 2005. As a result of migration dynamics and increasing population pressure, slum settlements in the Kathmandu Valley have emerged in different locations, mostly in Kathmandu Metropolitan City (Hada 2001), and are largely composed of diverse ethnicities and

⁶¹ As explained in the introduction of the doctoral thesis, the atypicality of the case study is also its main strength, in the sense that the succession of events circumstantially created a situation that allows the study of socially-constructed norms produced within a specific timeframe, for a settlement that was uncharacteristically stable in terms of composition and membership.

⁶² Chapter 4 is dedicated to the presentation of the case study.

castes, with multilingual populations originating from different parts of rural Nepal. High housing needs in the Kathmandu Valley create a paradoxical situation in which migration is driven by employment opportunities in the construction sector, although this booming sector has failed to provide cheap housing for all. Consequently, authorities have recognised that the problem of illegal settlements is growing in urban areas of Kathmandu, while concomitantly about 1.5 million landless households in Nepal are demanding access to and ownership of land for agricultural purposes, according to an estimation from the National Land Policy Consultation Workshop 2010. Lack of clear government policy to regulate the land market has been questioned by political parties, and land is considered one of the root causes of the decade-long insurgency, along with growing tension between urban and rural land uses, environmental deterioration, and housing development depending solely on private initiatives. The continued lack of progress on land reform is causing significant problems (1) to the development of sustainable rural livelihoods and (2) to the settlement of migrants in the Kathmandu Valley linked to the increasing internal migration for better employment opportunities.

Of the 75 slum settlements identified in the city region (Hada 2001), 65 of them are located in Kathmandu Metropolitan City along the riverbanks of the Vishnumati, which crosses the city from north to south, and of the Bagmati which flows south of Kathmandu. As the number of such squatter settlers rose (2 134 inhabitants in 1985, reaching 15 000 in 2005), the issue of urban poverty started to gain prominence in Nepal, in spite of the country still being seen as having a predominantly rural poverty. Some settlements date back to the beginning of the 1950s, although a large majority of them formed in the last two decades, and the historical and political contexts are powerful explanatory factors of slum formation: *"slum formation mostly happens when the government is weak or when governance is unclear. People take advantages of these positions. Following the 2005-06 political crisis, settlements in squatting areas appeared during election times. It happens in no time, a group of people come and build shelters all of a sudden. It is not one house after the other"* (key informant, January 2013, UN-Habitat Nepal).

The case of the Thapathali squatting area illustrates the slum formation process. Following a political demonstration in 2006, small shacks were built in a couple of days on government-owned land along the Bagmati River. Slum formation is also intrinsically related to migration dynamics and the demand for low skilled labour in Kathmandu. Economic opportunities, along with expectations of higher living standards, are a major driver. However, slum formation is more specifically linked to the increasing pressure on low income segments of the urban housing market, as migrants from the rural areas tend to settle in rented rooms first, before acquiring informal knowledge about squatting areas through relatives or friends. As living conditions in rented rooms are approximately equivalent to living conditions in slum settlements, rural migrants choose to move to squatting areas where they can increase their consumption levels as they save on rent.

In the Kathmandu metropolitan area, most slum settlements are inhabited by both recent and more permanent slum dwellers, from two or more generations after the first settlers came in spite of the uncertainty regarding eviction. As a result, the long establishment of these squatting areas tends to foster a sense of identity and belonging for slum dwellers who develop local ties through informal committees and self-help groups. Incremental housing approaches along with

sub-standard settlement upgrade therefore seem like a potential option for the Government of Nepal in order to incorporate informal neighbourhoods in a fast growing city. The rationale of incremental housing policies usually lies on a common understanding between households and the government, in which the government coordinates infrastructure and service provisions while households engage with constructing affordable dwellings that meet their priorities in a more efficient way than if the government had had to design and subsidise formal dwellings. Furthermore, the social, political and economic benefits of engaging illegal settlers in consolidation and housing upgrade plans are non-negligible, especially in the context of political uncertainty and limited confidence in the Nepalese government. The case of Thapathali slum settlement differs from the majority of Kathmandu's squatter settlements in various aspects, which might explain the failure of incremental housing approaches in the area. Situated along the riverbank, the 400-metre-long area encroached illegally from the Bagmati bridge in Thapathali to Buddhanagar occupies a strategic and central location, close to economic opportunities. First settlers arrived on the land only seven years ago, which makes it a new and heterogeneous community. The eviction itself took place on May 8th 2012, as local authorities deployed 2,000 police personnel from the Nepal Armed Police Forces with bulldozers. As resident families were not informed in the hours preceding the intervention that the eviction would take place, they were unable to gather their belongings, including citizenship papers. Households making a living from small shops or vegetable carts saw their income-generating assets destroyed in the eviction.

The eviction event⁶³

As a result of a three-year long process, the Nepalese government announced its intention to evict the Thapathali community for development purposes, with Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bijay Kumar Gachhadar insisting on removing the squatters at any expense. The Minister for Land Reforms and Management, Bhim Prasad Gautam, announced late 2011 that a consensus with the United National Landless Squatters Front had been reached to form a High-Level Landless Squatters Problems Resolution Commission to explore solutions and alternatives for the landless squatters. After a ten-day long process, the commission did not reach an agreement and it was decided in December 2011 to resort to force to conduct the eviction. A couple of months prior to the eviction, the government had informed the resident families that it was prepared to provide lump sum housing allowances to cover a three-month rent period. As this compensation was sought by only one fifth of the families living in Thapathali, Prime Minister Bhattarai held the squatters responsible for the eviction as they sided by the NGOs and INGOs instead of accepting the financial compensation offered by the government. As a result of the 8th May eviction, the government further announced that a relocation programme would be arranged for the evictees in the south of the city, although host communities had already been demonstrating against the relocation plan. The forced eviction and surrounding events raised concerns in the region, as human rights defenders from several Asian countries gathered in order to express their solidarity and concerns about the future of the populations concerned. Given the Government of Nepal's ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

⁶³ For a detailed account of the eviction events, refer to the historical overview of the Thapathali slum settlement in 4.6.

Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the international community has been quick to point out the government's obligations to provide adequate housing to the evicted households.

Importance of the study period

Conclusions established by the research are therefore to be considered in reference to the area of study, that is in reference to the slum area under consideration, to the urban context in which the research sets the investigation, to the broader dynamics of Kathmandu as a fast growing city and capital city of a small-sized and landlocked South Asian country, and in reference to the period of study which involved a recent eviction situation and associated political events that took place in the aftermaths of the eviction. While the particularity of the situation is emphasised in the following chapter⁶⁴ and that contextual elements are underlined along with their potential influence on the collected data, I chose here not to label the case study as a post-eviction situation for the purpose of this research, due to the specific objectives of the research which links to decision-making processes and the extent to which these are anchored in longer periods of time compared to events which had occurred a year before. While salient aspects of the eviction events and following political situation entailed a significant influence on decision-making processes relating to making a living, these are being considered as contextual factors and are not studied for themselves, nor as sub-items of the study object. Finally, as explained in the introduction of the doctoral thesis, the atypicality of the case study is also its main strength, in the sense that the succession of events circumstantially created a situation that allows the study of socially-constructed norms produced within a specific timeframe, for a settlement that was uncharacteristically stable in terms of composition and membership.

Methodology for investigating the case study

Approaches to investigate and collect data for the case study under consideration are linked to a variety of research methodologies, and aim at building an understanding of the case that relies on a wide range of informational sources. An observational design, as opposed to an experimental design, was established as the method of investigation, and implies that the case study research relies heavily on the deductive logic used for reconstructing causality within the single case of the Thapathali slum area and through the lens of the collected contextual evidence. Constructing a research design that illuminates the causal relationships of interest entails a careful pre-examination of the potential confounding causal factors. While an experimental design would attempt at replicating the study across multiple cases, providing a large N cross-case research evidence allowing comparison across time, space or context, it is important to emphasise that the single-case design of this research implied having to find out about the pattern of co-variation between the social space (the causal variable of interest) and decision-making processes (the outcome of interest). In other words, the case study design was coupled with a form of analysis that could *trace* the evidence of the multiplicity of layers affecting the causal relationship of interest. The common method of *process tracing* is to analyse information from the perspective of processes, events, actions, behaviours and other interacting variables, which are all potential causes to the production of the observed effects. Therefore,

⁶⁴ Chapter 4 is dedicated to the presentation of the case study.

theory-based conclusions were drawn from the identification of causal effects and causal mechanisms (process verification – testing the extent to which observed processes in a case study matches those predicted by theories). *Process tracing* has been useful for the purpose of ensuring internal validity of the selected case study, as social science explanations can rarely be appropriately disentangled from contextual factors and confounding causal factors. While all 'pieces of evidence' are relevant to the central causal relationship under investigation, these 'pieces of evidence' do not draw on a comprehensive sample – for instance, the totality of slum areas in Kathmandu or the total number of slum dwellers in the Thapathali slum area – and consequently form a snapshot of the phenomenon investigated within the frame of the case study. As a result, the conclusions and scope for generalisation are partially limited, although *process tracing* is used here as a way of finding out about the ramifications of a complex logic under influence of contextual and confounding causal factors – factors which could potentially vary as part of future research and further case study comparisons⁶⁵.

3.3 Nature and sources of data

As part of the case study design, both quantitative and qualitative research methods – further discussed in the later sections of this chapter – were used in order to record the relevant information. Beyond the dichotomised approach to collecting quantitative and qualitative types of data, the emphasis was placed on the possibility to analyse the gathered information in a statistical manner, which informed both the approach to data collection and the analysis techniques used. The interface between capturing the reality observed and the position of the social researcher facing the context of study entailed an attempt to define which were (1) the adequate sources of information and (2) the best procedures to capture the available information. Taking account of issues of subjectivity and attempts at recording a comprehensive account of the reality observed, the resulting typology of data is presented below along with the possible articulations between the different sources of collected data that were gathered and used for data analysis.

Quantifying information

Peculiar issues arise as a researcher focuses on categorising the social world in a logical manner. While this research takes a partial stand towards social constructionism⁶⁶, several barriers appeared along the way of identifying the appropriate methodology for data collection. The approach chosen can be related to Bourdieu's vision of research and his constant search for quantifying data material and articulating his thinking in mathematical ways (Robson and Sanders 2009). Quantification and formalisation serve a two-folded agenda, with the objective of (1) using quantitative data analysis as a logical way of 'interpreting interpretations of reality' while (2)

⁶⁵ Opportunities for replication of the methodology used in this research are outlined in the conclusion of the doctoral thesis.

⁶⁶ As explained in Chapter 1, both objectivism and constructionism are rallied for the purpose of this research, (1) objectivism as a tool to understand the norms and value system as objective entities existing largely autonomously from social agents, and (2) constructionism as a framework to interpret social phenomena such as choice, behaviour and action as produced by agents' interpretations through social interaction and continuously revised within a social context.

addressing the shortcomings of dominant qualitative approaches to conceptualising the social world. In an attempt to counter-balance the one-dimensional perspective on the social world taken by economic analyses while accounting for the multiple dimensions of culture, symbols and norms widely explored from a social constructivist standpoint Bourdieu conceptualised the notion of 'field' as a specific locus within the wider global social space, defined by a relative autonomy although anchored in a larger structure encompassing the agenda and configuration of various agents (Bourdieu 1971). A practical approach to measuring 'items' of social reality such as Bourdieusian fields was identified by Bourdieu through the use of objectification – which finds its practical tools of investigation in quantitative data collection in providing a scientific synthesis of statistical information. The 'object' of study is therefore seen as a distant item for the researcher, which considers the 'object' as a complex phenomenon being part of one or more fields, while allowing this distance to be used as a tool for capturing the distinct contributions of various patterns to the definition of this 'object'. The added value of formalising social reality is therefore multi-folded: first, the value of addressing the complexities of social worlds by listing all aspects of them in a systematic way and thereby avoiding a biased focus on some salient categories of social reality, and second, the value of accounting for the relational aspects of social worlds through the modelling of different views of the world and their constant interactions in different fields.

A quantitative approach to the social world is necessary in order to identify the specific trends of the observed phenomena. Without a quantified understanding of the object of study, the researcher risks to place the results of his/her work in a subjectively affected interpretation of the field observations, which are likely to be accounted for in an emotive language demonstrating the inherent unbalanced interests for various aspects of the object of study, as these gradually come to the perception and observation of the researcher during the field research. It is nevertheless important to emphasise here that the focus on 'quantifying reality' does not mean anchoring the research in a positivist approach but on the contrary serves the purpose of quantifying the social construction of reality from the standpoint of the different units of study using a systematic and rigorous approach to how these social constructs are being recorded by the researcher.

Although the primary focus of the data collection has been to approach the context of study with an objective 'counting' of subjective social constructs, the data collected encompasses wider aspects and notes from field observation. Field notes and reports of the personal experience of the researcher embedded in his/her field work were carefully recorded and are likely to have had a significant influence on the way quantitative data were collected. While having a unique researcher in charge of the whole process of data collection can be highlighted as a strength for consistency in the research study (as opposed to inter-observer variability when different researchers are gathering data), it can be ascertained that own experiences, thoughts, perceptions and feelings played a role in how field observations fuelled the specific shape of the research. Understanding bias in research is crucial and mostly refers to the systematic (or unsystematic) difference between how information is recorded and interpreted. With a specific agenda for research in mind, the researcher – here the study designer, survey designer and interviewer – is likely to solicit or interpret interviewees' answers in a way that

is favourable to the study, or emphasise the favourable/ non-favourable aspects of the given answers. The researcher is furthermore involved in capturing data relating to social constructs while being a socially constructed and embedded agent himself/herself, which implies a subjective view of the social reality being observed. While these remarks remain valid for the qualitative data collection underlined below, mitigation strategies in the specific case of quantitative data collection have encompassed, among others, a thorough recording of observation techniques and notes being taken during the full length of the interview process.

Qualitative evidence

A significant amount of time during the field work was also placed on collecting a qualitative type of data, following the argument that identified trends can only be explained by an understanding of the dynamics at work beyond the recorded patterns. An investigation of past events in respondents' lives and personal narratives from key informants was deemed necessary in order to capture the processes beyond the shaping of social constructs, along with the wider context in which decisions take place. Qualitative data collection has served various purposes and answered different challenges in the peculiarity of measuring the social world. The research here focuses on a specific aspect of qualitative data which is the notion of collecting narratives, defined as *"the ways in which people make and use stories to interpret the world"* (May 2002: 46). By choosing to collect social constructs in a qualitative form, the researcher draws the line between choosing to 'objectively' interpret pieces of reality or stories and recording them in a defined set of categories or type of answer and choosing to treat narratives as stories which the respondents have the freedom to articulate in their own words and present as part of a broader set of events, events which are not deemed to be true or false, but rather social products produced by the respondent in the context of his/her specific social, historical and cultural standpoints. The added value of collecting narratives, in the case of both primary respondents and key informants, lies in capturing the storied account of a situation, of the past, of a set of events, of a decision, while anchoring the narrative in the social world in which the interview is storied by identifying the use, for instance, of popular cultural mind-sets or socially integrated norms as a mean for respondents to construct their personal narratives and 'locate' themselves in existing social worlds. To the extent that narratives give both the structure and the location of the agent within these structures, a qualitative approach to recording information relating to social constructs and decision-making was deemed accurate and complementary to quantifying similar information as part of the field research.

Abstract nature of the evidence collected

An important point remains to be stated as to the nature of the data collected when researching processes as abstract as decision-making and the shaping of social constructs. Approaching reality and its measurement implies multiple considerations, among which the idea that social reality is distinct from biological reality or even individual cognitive reality leaves the space for measurement open to various challenges, with the additional issue of defining an appropriate unit of analysis. While confronting social reality, the researcher finds himself/herself with the difficult task of measuring humanly created and shaped constructions of the world, which are both abstract, diffuse aspects of everyday life while being the continuous fabric of

social interactions and ways of thinking. As Searle (1995: 153) argued, "*a socially constructed reality presupposes a reality independent of all social constructions*", implying that the researcher will have an attempt at assuming his/her position as being the one of the independent reality, around which s/he would be able to measure and organise a range of different social constructions. A similar approach can be applied to the measurement of decisions and related processes – although such a position is highly utopian and not realisable in practice. I therefore argue that the social researcher undertaking research on social objects from a partial constructivist standpoint will inevitably be faced with both the diffuse aspects of the object of study (in the sense that social constructs in which decisions take place are not 'solids' and cannot be grasped in a specific location, with specific words, or even looking at peculiar behaviours) and the inherent characteristics of social realities as being part of a dense fabric in which all aspects of everyday life are being attracted and gravitate in the form of a particularly entangled web. As such, the individuals interviewed as part of this study have been telling 'their truth', independent from an 'absolute truth' but necessarily constructed in relation to 'others' truth' and further influenced by the 'truth' they expected the researcher should hear – taking the shortcuts agents thought were appropriate. Unconsciously but also partially consciously, agents' truth may be instrumental or strategic – which encourages the researcher to take a partial constructivist standpoint⁶⁷, that is, receiving and granting importance to people's truth while still questioning the reasons behind agents' statements of their particular truth.

3.4 Sampling strategy

It is worthy to start here by pointing out the difficulty to assess the boundaries of the case study and define the limits of the 'universe under consideration' when the *study object* – the slum as a delimited space in which decisions are being taken and shaped by various factors constituting the universe – can easily be mistaken for a simple *context of study*. The blurry line between taking a descriptive approach to the *study context* and approaching the slum space as a *physical, social and decision space with an 'itemised' existence as such* has been an important aspect to tackle during the research, and I chose to approach the multiple dimensions of this space through the frame of the boundaries created by both the social norms and the physical space of the slum area as such. While the physical, social and decision space of interest cannot be conceptualised and modelled as a sealed and framed space per se, the permeability of such a space is acknowledged as part of the discussion of findings, and was defined as a universe with a statistical meaning in which sampling procedures were applied in order to capture a random sample of information from the area of interest.

⁶⁷ As explained in Chapter 1, both objectivism and constructionism are rallied for the purpose of this research, (1) objectivism as a tool to understand the norms and value system as objective entities existing largely autonomously from social agents, and (2) constructionism as a framework to interpret social phenomena such as choice, behaviour and action as produced by agents' interpretations through social interaction and continuously revised within a social context.

The Thapathali slum area

As neither community mapping data nor census data were specifically produced about the Thapathali slum area, the slum is defined as a geographically bounded plot of land, using the natural physical delimitations of the river flood plain⁶⁸ (**Photograph 3.1**). Situated along the riverbank, the 400-metre-long area encroached illegally from the Bagmati bridge in Thapathali to Buddhanagar occupies a strategic and central location in Kathmandu, close to economic opportunities. A specific feature of the area is linked to its status as floodable land, the latest major flood dating back to 1993. Due to sand mining activities, the area has been less subjected to flooding although it remains classified as a river flood plain by local authorities. As opposed to other squatter settlements in Kathmandu, the Thapathali area is visible to most of the urban population as the Bagmati bridge offers a clear view of the small shacks. The area can be defined by its natural geographical limitations, as the river flood plain is situated at or below the water level in some parts, and the delimitation between the plain where the slum is located and the rest of the neighbourhood can be clearly identified by the wide ghat pillars⁶⁹, former demarcation of the river bank before the land emerged as a river flood plain.

The narrow understanding of the typological characteristics of slum settlements has been underlined in recent studies (CRIT 2010), which argue that slum settlements have distinct features and cannot be placed under a single category. The typological differences range from several aspects under which slum areas have been categorised, and the identification of a slum, as explored as part of this research, shows that documenting the details of housing construction and living standards has often encountered several limitations. Although not systematically defined by universally accepted formal boundaries, slum areas are often mapped using a set of criteria relating to living conditions, involving predominantly poor housing, high housing density, poor sewage and drainage, inadequate drinking water supply, and limited urban infrastructure (street lighting, paved streets, structural organisation of the inner street system). In the case of the Thapathali slum area, the geographical and spatial characteristics of the area make the identification of geographical boundaries relatively simple, while the dwellings of inhabitants occupying the area can be easily mapped as either 'within' or 'outside' the land flooding area, while sharing similar living conditions as described above (poor urban infrastructures, absence of sewage and inadequate drinking water supply). With such a 'hermetic' clustering of the slum population at the geographical level, the research assumed that a common set of norms and social representations could be identified and could constitute an additional way of identifying the boundaries of the social group under consideration⁷⁰. Nevertheless, because this assumption overlaps with the research questions, argumentation and discussion of findings, targeting the population of reference through a shared set of norms and beliefs was proxied by the use of the geographical clustering of the slum population, which gives a delimited physical space in which to look for socially constructed spaces. Therefore, the physical space is understood, in the specific

⁶⁸ These physical delimitations are the delimitations used as part of the common reference to 'the Thapathali settlement', both by inhabitants of the area and key informants living outside the area.

⁶⁹ Used in many parts of Northern South Asia, the term ghat refers to a series of steps leading down to a body of water, particularly a holy river.

⁷⁰ The 'hermetic' nature of the Thapathali area was one of the factors leading to the decision to choose this settlement as the case study for this research.

case of the Thapathali slum area, as the primary component for the characterisation of the slum, the identification of the slum population and the study of the social spaces in which slum dwellers operate.

Photograph 3.1 Thapathali slum, east of Bagmati bridge, along the northern bank of the Bagmati river



Source: Google Maps 2013⁷¹

Unit and sub-units of analysis

The population of reference defined as the slum population inhabiting the Thapathali slum area based on its geographical boundaries was further refined through the collection of survey data and field observations. The approach taken to mapping the space and its inhabitants was conducted at the household level, defined by (1) the dwelling configuration and (2) whether individuals were taking food from the same kitchen. A household was categorised as such when responding to the criteria of a person or group of persons occupying a housing unit as their usual place of residence. Household members could be related or unrelated, were identified as living together at least over the course of the past six months prior to the study, and taking food from the same kitchen (defined as sharing common provisions for food and other essentials for living (UNSTATS 2013)). The household was further defined as a group of persons pooling their incomes and having a common budget to a greater or lesser extent. Combining these criteria, the household unit could be identified first through the dwelling place, and second through the pooling of income and sharing food from the same kitchen. In some cases, the *dwelling household* and *pooled income household* definitions were supplemented by the *economic unit* definition, as some households were carrying out economic activities in the household premises – the use of these three definitions ascertained the household structure was defined in a systematic

⁷¹ Official maps featuring the Thapathali settlement are presented in Chapter 4.

way, and used in the following order: dwelling, pooled income, economic unit. In the case of households with members living or working abroad, these members were not counted as part of the household and are not reflected in the compiled statistics at household member level as they do not share the kitchen – however, information and socio-economic data were collected on these members, and their contribution to the household income through remittances was accounted for.

Different sub-units of analysis were defined, based on the above discussion around the household definition.

The *household head* was defined as a member treated as the head by the other household members. The common agreement between other household members ensured the term household head was correctly used, and generally referred to the eldest male or female earner of the household. The main earner was referred to as main earner and not household head for the purpose of this research, since the person who was acknowledged as head of the household by other members of the household was not always the main earner in terms of income size.

The *main earner* was therefore defined as the person who brings the highest amount of material return in cash or kind to the pooled resources of the household. The concept of earning included any household member receiving income or economically contributing to household resources.

The *respondent* differed from the head of household or the main earner, and is considered in this research as the primary sub-unit for analysis within the household. Identified by other household members when the interviews were conducted, the household head was identified as the respondent when s/he was available, although it should be noted that in a large number of cases, the respondent was the spouse of the household head when the household head was not present during the survey.

As a result, although random selection was achieved at the household level, the study sample at the respondent level has a selection bias relating to (1) household members' availability and (2) 'who' was designated as respondent by other household members. In order to address this bias, several strategies were put in place, among which conducting interviews at various moments of the day, early enough to get to talk to the household head before s/he was leaving for work, or late in the evenings including both weekdays and weekends. At the statistical level, the sample of respondents was weighted in order to account for the probability of being selected as a respondent as part of the survey (inverse probability weighting⁷²), thereby ensuring a random selection of respondents compared to the total sample of household members.

Family members were designated in relation to the head of household, similarly to household members except that the only members considered were the household members who were related through family linkages. The family was defined as consisting of wife/ wives, unmarried sons and daughters, cousins, nephews and nieces, married sons who were living in the household dwelling and sharing the kitchen as direct dependents, married daughters when they

⁷² Refer to 'Further methodological notes' at the end of this chapter.

were living with their parents, along with other direct dependents such as parents, grandparents, unmarried brothers/ sisters, separated/ divorced siblings and other dependent relations.

The *extended family* was defined more broadly based on the respondent's understanding of what s/he considered as his/her extended family. The common understanding was an extensive one, including family members and relatives who were living in different parts of Nepal, most of the time in the villages where the respondent migrated from in the first place.

Using the *dwelling household* definition, an informal census (or counting⁷³) of the number of households inhabiting the Thapathali slum area was conducted, and it was estimated that approximately 200 households live in the Thapathali slum area⁷⁴. The creation of a household registry was made difficult by the spatial organisation of dwellings, and situations in which households inhabited different dwellings or situations where the extended family shared the kitchen but not the dwellings. This is the reason why the research refers to an approximation of the number of households living in the Thapathali slum area.

Sampling strategy

Once the universe had been defined, the following step for primary data collection related to defining an appropriate sample within this universe. The universe being approximately 200 households, a sample was drawn from this base population in order to maximise sample coverage and minimise coverage errors. Demographic and structural characteristics of the respondents are ideally known before building the sample – however, this was a difficult task as the population of reference has no statistical records. The construction of the sample frame was therefore based on a sample as comprehensive as possible to account for the reference population. With quite a small reference population (approximately 200 households), it can be assumed that a sample size of 50 households surveyed out of the total 200 households provides an accurate estimation of the indicators of interest. Nonetheless, it is important to note that statistically speaking, the sample selected for this research does not constitute a representative sample of the total population. In order to ensure that random selection within the population of reference was achieved, weighting techniques are applied at the level of respondents, as explained in **Table 3.2**.

The sample selection process was conducted at the household level. In order to build a randomized sample, choices were made relatively to:

- **Sampling method:** while traditional random sampling techniques could not be used due to the lack of information relating to the population of reference (no official records or list of households living in the slum area under consideration, and reliance on an

⁷³ This 'counting' was carried out as a form of non-participant observation (i.e. without verbally engaging with each of the 'counted' households), which entails that some of the individuals or housing structures counted as representing one household may actually have represented two distinct households (e.g. situations where two households inhabit the same dwelling), or only parts of a household (e.g. situations in which a household inhabits different dwellings). By contrast, the households that were interviewed as part of the household survey were identified following an initial discussion, whereby the particular situation of the household members could be clarified.

⁷⁴ This figure is corroborated (+/-10%) in the newspaper articles used as secondary data sources for the research. The variations observed in the number of slum dwellers occupying the Thapathali area demonstrate the absence of an official census and the reliance on different non-official estimations proposed by local NGOs or researchers.

approximate counting of the total number of households), the random selection of the sample was ensured by selecting households using a geographical sampling method, which consisted in interviewing a defined number of households I, every X dwelling unit identified during a random walk, X being determined relatively to the size of the population of reference. This method allowed controlling for neighbourhood effects (each portion of the slum area has equal chances to have households interviewed) and is fairly close to random sampling techniques. Random walk ensured a uniform or quasi-uniform sampling of the area of interest.

- **Sample size:** since X has to be chosen relative to the total number of household living in the slum settlement (approximately 200 households), the ratio of interviewed households/total number of household was calculated using the following formula:

$$X = I / T$$

X: frequency of household interviews based on dwelling units

I: number of interviewed households (50 households)

T: total number of households (approximately 200 households)

As a result, approximately one in four households were interviewed in the Thapathali slum area during the random walks. Due to a certain number of households being away from home at the time of the survey, the selection of the next interviewed household was based on the next available household, following the random walk process described above. Overall, 50 households were interviewed. A dwelling unit was defined as a unit availed of by a household for its residential purpose. In case of more than one household occupying a single structure such as households sharing a single housing unit, it was considered that there were as many dwelling units as the number of households sharing the structure. In the case of one household occupying more than one structure (such as detached dwellings for sleeping, cooking, bathing, etc.), all the structures together were considered as a single dwelling unit.

Table 3.2 Sampling techniques, by unit of analysis

Unit of analysis	Size of surveyed population	Size of total population	Sampling techniques	Selection/ weightings
Households	50	approx. 200	Random walks covering the delimited physical area of the slum	50 out of 200 households living in the slum area; random selection at geographical level
Household members	236	approx. 950	All household members surveyed in selected households	236 out of approximately 950 (approximate number of households in the area multiplied by average household size in surveyed households); random selection at household level
Respondents (in-depth interviews)	50	approx. 950 (of which 236 household members were surveyed)	Identified by other household members when the interviews were conducted	50 out of the 236 household members surveyed Weighting: Inverse probability weighting to account for the probability of being selected as a respondent as part of the survey compared to other household members

3.5 Primary data sources

Household survey

The approach to primary data collection uses a household survey conducted in the slum area. A quantitative classification of the socio-demographic aspects, economic conditions, migration patterns and living strategies was set as the purpose of the household survey, along with a systematised collection of views and perceptions relating to how slum dwellers make their livings which was achieved using Likert scales. The structure of the survey was therefore two-folded – on the one hand, data was collected at the household level and aimed at gathering information about the household structure and household members using a quantitative data collection strategy; on the other hand, household interviews were also used as an opportunity to discuss and collect information relating to life stories, life trajectories and wider aspects of making a living through the use of a qualitative interview guide.

The research instrument used for the household survey (refer to **Annex C**) was designed in order to capture the following quantitative information:

- **Socio-demographic information:** age, relation to the head of household, education level, marital status, employment status, employment description;
- **Economic status:** monthly income, durable goods, livestock, welfare benefits, land tenure status, dwelling unit structure, electricity and sanitation;
- **Migration, Religion and Ethnicity:** district where household migrated from, number of years of stay in Kathmandu, number of years of stay in Thapathali, reason why household migrated to Kathmandu, social network through which household decided to settle in Thapathali, whether household owns land in rural areas, whether household's family owns land in rural area, whether household went back to rural area since first migrated to Kathmandu, frequency of visit to family, whether household is sending money back home or receiving money, first occupation of head of household when migrated to Kathmandu, whether head of household lived in rented room when first arrived, number of years household stayed in rented room, religion, caste status, ethnicity;
- **Activities relating to making a living:** number of household members of working age, number of household members supporting the family, reasons for unemployment, employment status and description, place of work, number of days worked per month, monthly earnings for each household member on average, how long has the household member been engaged in the activity, how household member found out about the activity, who is making decisions within the household about supporting the family, barriers to accessing opportunities (living in a geographical enclave/ isolation/ lack of information about opportunities/ limited education/ absence of social networks), importance of social networks and types of social networks, whether what household earns is enough to support everyone in the household, last period of hardship, reason for hardship, strategy during last period of hardship, latest loan taken and size of loan;
- **Extended family and kinship information:** size of extended family, whether extended family has an influence on household decisions, whether household still has family living in

rural area, whether household has family living in Kathmandu, whether household has good contacts with family, whether household relies on extended family, existence of a family occupation over several generations; and

- **Perceived norms and beliefs measured by Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree)⁷⁵:** reasons for choosing an occupation or livelihood strategy are linked to (1) Financial aspects, (2) Security and sustainability aspects, (3) Type of work and importance of education and skills, (4) Location aspects, (5) Absence of choice and limited opportunities, (6) Social and political status within community, (7) Gender aspects, (8) Ethnicity and religious aspects, (9) Generational effects, (10) Kinship influence, (11) Community spirit and self-help groups, (12) Socio-economic stratification within slum area.

The rationale for using a Likert scale methodology for the last component of the household survey relates to the added value of scaling responses when the collected information is identified as subjective and difficult to capture. Recording answers through a psychometric scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) allowed a rigorous scoring of subjective and relative information along a symmetric agree-disagree spectrum, and was identified as an appropriate strategy for capturing variations in the levels of agreement or disagreement with ways of making a living and for factors affecting and determining the strategies for making a living. A symmetric agree-disagree scale was constructed for the series of statements under investigation. Capturing the intensity of agreement, disagreement, feelings and perceptions for the given items served the purpose of allowing the research to classify the collected information in a systematic way that would allow quantitative belief system analysis. While several limitations can be identified with the use of Likert scales – for instance the itemisation of answers and the framing of responses into a pre-defined scale – the extent to which Likert items can be interpreted as being ordinal data has also been a subject of disagreement in the literature. The discussion around the likelihood to obtain an objective and non-arbitrary measure for each Likert item whereas values assigned to such items have no objective numerical basis per se is a crucial aspect that the research attempts to address through the use of triangulation methods and cross-checks with information gathered as part of the qualitative data collection. While it can also be argued that the distance between each item category is not systematically equivalent (intervals between 1 to 5), a counter argument lies in the use of a five-point Likert item versus a four-point Likert scale, the former allowing an equidistant distribution of choices due to the symmetry of the item categories. Finally, an important aspect remains in the interpretation of the Likert-like scale by the respondents themselves, who can have a different understanding of the categories and not treat them as equidistant categories. For the purpose of this research, it can be argued that the administration of the questionnaire was done in a systematised way by a unique interviewer (and a single interpreter), which allowed an iterative approach to the way the Likert scale component of the survey was presented to respondents, accounting for the understanding of a first set of respondents which informed the appropriateness of the research instrument used.

⁷⁵ For further details about this survey component, refer to Annex C.

As explained in 3.4, the timeframe for administering the household survey questionnaire was tailored in order to allow a wide selection of the type of respondents throughout the moments of the day during which the questionnaire was administered or the types of day (weekdays and weekend days) when a most representative sample of the respondents would be available for participating in the household survey. The survey therefore took part on an equal number of weekdays and weekend days, while the surveying strategy implied beginning interviews early in the mornings (6 o'clock, morning) until late in the evenings (7 o'clock, evening). Applying this strategy therefore ensured that the respondents who were working early in the mornings or late in the afternoons were also given a chance to participate in the survey compared to the non-working respondents who stayed in the slum area all day long.

As expected, and in spite of the mitigation strategies developed to counter-balance the higher chances of participation in the household survey of specific sub-groups living in the Thapathali slum area, selection bias occurred as the study population presented different levels of accessibility or interest in taking part in the survey. The selection bias identified as part of the survey therefore falls in two different categories:

- **Household selection bias:** availability of the identified households to participate in the survey, affected by timings of the administration of the survey, likelihood of household to be working outside of the Thapathali slum area at the time of the survey, or likelihood of household to be visiting the rural areas; and
- **Respondent selection bias:** the criteria used for recruiting the respondent who was to provide information about the household and other household members differed from one household to another; while in a large number of cases (two thirds) the respondent was identified as the only person available for the interview at the time the interview was being conducted, and therefore usually fell in the categories of spouse of the head of household or second earner, a significant number of situations (one third) occurred in which the respondent was designated by the other household members in presence as the most suitable informant (with more seniority in the household for instance). In the later, the respondents were more likely to be head of household, main earner or eldest household member.

Life stories

Life stories were also collected as part of the household survey and supplemented the quantitative data collection. As mentioned above, the household survey was used as an entry point to collecting quantitative data about the household, the household members (present or not present at the time of the survey) and the primary respondent. In order to conduct an in-depth analysis of the quantitative data collected, the collection of life stories and discussion around life trajectories along with wider aspects of making a living took place after the first part of the household survey and focused on gathering further information about the household of interest in order to link both quantitative and qualitative data collected for each household when conducting a mixed-method analysis. The interview guide can be found below.

Key life events

- **General:** when and where was respondent born, where were parents' respondent from, parents' level of education, parents' migration patterns, parents' occupations, siblings, birth order and occupations of siblings;
- **Housing:** housing and dwelling unit when respondent was a child, description of living conditions and comparison with current dwelling situation;
- **Childhood:** relationship with parents and siblings, responsibilities and chores at home, food, leisure activities and health of the respondent and family; difficult periods during childhood, major events related to coping strategies and channels of support, importance of relatives, friends, NGOs support; changes in asset levels and livelihood strategies; goals, preferences and aspirations of the respondent as a child;
- **Adulthood:** relationships before marriage, decision to get married, parents' views about marriage, dowry and land inheritance, moving out to spouse's village, relationship with in-laws; children and birth, bringing up children, support from kin and extended family; first occupation, help received from family and in-laws; conditions, constraints, profitability and risks related to work; health of respondent and family members; goals, preferences and aspirations of the respondent as an adult; and
- **Older age:** age respondent stopped being able to work, changes in circumstances; widowhood and implications, change in status; relationship with other family members, responsibilities, support from children, role in community and status; hardship periods and retirement strategy.

Social norms and respondent's belief system

- **Social world:** links with colleagues, friends, employers, richer/poorer households; relation with kin;
- **Network:** social networks, clubs, church, friends and kinship networks; and
- **Events outside the home:** insecurity, politics, relationship with local authorities, tax authorities, perception of police, government, political interventions.

Respondent's aspirations, stigma and risk taking

- **Past choices:** examples of past decisions which affect future choices, narrative account of life choices;
- **Risk taking:** perceptions about risks taken relating to livelihood, family decisions and poverty situations;
- **Differentiation:** perception of being different, choosing different strategies, mainstream strategies, worthiness and views of the community and kin; and
- **Aspirations and goals:** life events perceived as achievements, changing patterns in aspirations and goals.

Triangulation through a second set of life story interviews

For the purpose of getting an informed understanding of the dynamics at play in the slum area of interest, a second set of life story interviews was collected in a different slum area located in the Kathmandu Valley, in which slum dwellers experienced similar living conditions as in the Thapathali slum settlement⁷⁶. The rationale for selecting the second slum area was linked to the size of the settlement, similar in geographical and population size to the Thapathali slum area, and respondents were selected using random walk techniques. While the Thapathali slum area encapsulates specific patterns linked to the history of the settlement and the recent eviction events that took place in May 2012, collecting views and life stories of slum dwellers in a different context – the context of an established slum settlement in which slum dwellers had been occupying the land for more than two decades – was deemed necessary for the purpose of research objectivity. Findings from this second set of life story interviews are not presented as part of this research, due to the smallness of the sample of life stories collected (10). Nonetheless, the dynamics observed, in relation to land ownership, reasons for migration, living standards in a slum area and livelihood strategies, demonstrate the existence of a context similar to the context of the Thapathali area, without the influence of external events such as eviction or internal reconfigurations of group dynamics following such external events.

Key informant interviews

As shown in **Table 3.3**, qualitative data was also collected during key informant interviews, with the purpose of gathering the perceptions of various local actors in the aftermath of the Thapathali slum eviction that took place in May 2012. Information was collected using a semi-structured interview guide, presented below. The interviewees ranged from a wide array of actors involved with the history of slum settlements in Kathmandu: representatives from NGOs, INGOs, social workers, government officials, academics, journalists and community leaders. A detailed typology of the interviewed key informants can be found in **Table 3.4**.

The selection strategy used for selected the key informants was purposive sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994) using the following selection criteria: (1) deemed knowledgeable in slum areas, strategies for making a living and urban dynamics; and (2) able to represent a specific set of views, e.g. views from social workers, views from journalists, etc. Efforts during the selection strategy were made in order to include a broad representation of the different types of local actors available for interview.

⁷⁶ The Swoyambhu area comprises 32 households, roughly 150 inhabitants. It is located along the small river down the Monkey temple, in Swoyambhu, Kathmandu.

Table 3.3 Primary data, by type of data and unit of analysis

Type of primary data	Unit of analysis	Number of observations	Research instruments
Qualitative	Key informants (NGOs, INGOs, government, academics, journalists, community leaders)	46	One hour long semi structured interviews
Quantitative	Slum dwellers (respondent level)	50	One to two hour long interviews, including a quantitative component (living standards, ethnicity, caste, land ownership, income, durable goods, household economics, migration, periods of hardship, and perception data collected using Likert scales)
Qualitative			One to two hour long interviews, including a qualitative component (life stories and open-ended questions)
Qualitative		10	Life story interviews in a different slum in the Kathmandu Valley

An indicative interview guide used during the key informant interviews can be found below.

- Role and function of key informant;
- Slum context in Kathmandu, history and social aspects; general knowledge of the Thapathali slum area;
- Migration patterns, religion and ethnicity of slum dwellers;
- Labour market and opportunities for slum dwellers;
- Type of employment and barriers to accessing opportunities;
- Importance of social networks and information about opportunities;
- Infrastructures and access to the city;
- Social groups and self-help groups in slum areas;
- Value system and beliefs at the slum level;
- Kin system and linkages with extended family for slum dwellers;
- Coping strategies and social mobility in Kathmandu;
- Political situation and eviction events;
- Government strategy to address the slum situation in Kathmandu;
- Changes (political, cultural, social) occurring in the last decade at the city level; and
- Norms and views related to slum areas from the perspective of Kathmandu's middle class.

It can be argued that the selection process for identifying local actors who participated in academic research, journalistic investigation, or engaged with the communities as leaders, social workers or local politicians was potentially subjective and subjected to informants' availability and interest in sharing their views. This entailed the gathering of a collection of specific views on slum areas that can be questioned as to whether the key informant interview transcripts can be studied as one homogenous set of information. However, the collected information at key

informant level was investigated rigorously, keeping in mind the heterogeneity of the information collected, while a significant added value of gathering the views of a wide array of local actors related to the extent to which information could be triangulated using the views of diverse audiences. In the process of getting to know a context, its history and the wider social and political dynamics at play, the wider the selection of key informants was, the easier it was to identify a core set of views, assumptions and beliefs about the studied situation.

Table 3.4 Key informants interviewed

Type of actor	Function	Affiliation
Academics (10)	Senior Researcher, South Asia Regional Coordination Office	National Centre of Competence in Research North-South (NCCR)
	Lecturer in Sociology	Tribhuvan University (TU)
	Director	HERD
	Professor	Resource Himalaya
	Lecturer	Tribhuvan University (TU)
	Lecturer	Tribhuvan University (TU)
	Fellow on Public Life and Public Knowledge	Martin Chautari
	Researcher, Population Studies	Tribhuvan University (TU)
	Researcher	IIDS
	Environmental Economist	SANDEE, ICIMOD
Local NGOs (20)	Team Leader	Children and Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH)
	Director	Global Action
	Director	CWIN
	Program Manager	Mitrataa Foundation, Dream Catchers Nepal (DCN)
	Program Manager	Stichting Veldwerk
	Director	Loo Niva Child Concern Group
	Program Manager	Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS)
	Director	Micronutrient Initiative
	Director	Child trafficking Initiative
	Director	Child Nepal
	Program Manager	Next Generation Nepal
	Program Officer	Lumanti
	Director	Creating Possibilities
	Director	WOCAN
	Director	Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organisation
	Director	Equal Access
	Lecturer	Tribhuvan University (TU)
	Director	Seeds for Change
	Country representative	Asia Foundation
	Program Manager	ISIS Foundation

Type of actor	Function	Affiliation
International NGOs / International organisations (11)	Program Officer, South Asian Office	International Commission for Dalit Rights (ICDR)
	Program Manager	World Vision International
	Country Office Director	Planet Finance
	Program Officer	Practical Action
	Program Officer	ILO
	Program Officer	ILO
	Country representative	UNESCO
	Health adviser	DFID Health
	Senior Economic Advisor	UNDP
	Programme Manager for Nepal	UN-Habitat
	Program Officer	UNICEF
Journalists (5)	Journalist	Independent / Former affiliation to Martin Chautari
	Journalist	Independent
	Director of Parliamentary Programs	NDI
	Film maker	Independent film maker
	Representative	Joint national slum commission

3.6 Limitations of primary data sources

Several limitations have been identified in relation to the validity of the primary data collected. The research methods have been considered as valid when they actually targeted the data they were designed to collect – however, a number of bias and limitations have been listed already, during and after the field data collection process. In general, measurement error occurred when it could be noticed that the difference between responses or information collected could not be attributed to the differences in the studied population.

The need for an interpreter was a limitation, in terms of the possibility to verify the quality of the data collected. A research assistant speaking both Nepali and English fluently was recruited at the beginning of the field research and was involved during the whole length of the household survey and collection of life stories with slum dwellers, as the studied population was only Nepali-speaking. It should be noted that Nepalese share the Nepali language but additionally speak alternative dialects from different areas of Nepal. Risks related to the use of an interpreter were identified before and during the study, and the reflections upon an effective collaboration between the interviewer (/the researcher) and the interpreter helped refine the appropriate conditions in which to conduct the household survey and collection of life stories. While the accuracy in the translation procedure could be affected by the personal interpretations of the interpreter, it is argued here that the added value of having a Nepalese interpreter mitigated the risks of mistranslation by capturing the cultural aspects of the interviewer-interviewees interactions and making these understandable by the researcher. A remaining concern that could not be addressed at the time of the survey related to the likelihood of unclear responses' reformulation by the interpreter, and should be considered in case of further data analysis, in particular in the case of interpreting life stories. Shortcomings related to language and translation from Nepali to English have been addressed as far as it was made possible by keeping the level of language

and vocabulary set of the interviewees, as indicated at the time of the interviews by the interpreter to the researcher.

The interviewer bias effect was a minor issue concerning the resulting quality of collected data, as both the researcher and the interpreter were engaged in collecting all of the data used in this research, minimising the risk of inconsistency in questioning. Regarding respondents' behaviours and attitudes during the survey, social desirability bias was more of a concern, as some respondents may have tailored their responses to be seen in a favourable light by the interviewer, in particular for questions regarding their assets or coping strategies during period of hardship. Concerns from respondents about how the information collected would be used and whether their privacy would be ensured arose during the administration of the questionnaire, although each respondent was assured that the research conducted was independent and anonymised, with no linkages with government activities. It may be that respondents' attitudes were further influenced by the presence of other household members or friends during the interview process, as some respondents were interviewed in the public space or informal spaces existing between dwellings. The resulting group of slum dwellers that gathered around and attended the interview is likely to have produced an additional tendency for respondents' social desirability, which could not adequately be controlled for.

The extent to which survey questions could be answered by the identified respondent was also of concern (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000). The use of a questionnaire which asked respondents to categorise their life experiences and perceptions about making a living using quantitative scales can be considered as introducing further bias, as many respondents provided answers that did not match the coded response options as part of the household survey. In these particular cases, the researcher opted for re-asking and clarifying the question under consideration, while being careful not to make the respondent feel obliged to stick to a response category for lack of another response option. The technicality of the household survey was counterbalanced by a more flexible and open-ended interview guide during the collection of life stories, which allowed respondents to share their views and opinions in a more conversational way.

Difficulties relating to ethical considerations were also important during primary data collection, as the political situation in the aftermath of the eviction events enhanced the sensitivity of the research topic, although the primary focus was not directly related to the political dimensions of urban poverty and slum settlements. Ethical aspects fell into two categories. Firstly, it can be argued that asking respondents about their life narratives or perceptions relating to expectations, aspirations and opportunities was a divisive approach, as the space for self-evaluation depends largely on personal characteristics, experiences, circumstances and personal history – all of which are sensitive topics to approach with respondents. Secondly, political considerations and conflicts of interest arose as part of the research due to frequent visits to the ministries for interviews with local politicians and local authorities, while interviews with key informants – in spite of the neutral aspect of the research – involved journalists with strong political stands. As most of these interviews took place in public spaces – coffee shops, restaurants, hotel lobbies – issues related to privacy and sensitivity of content arose and limited the extent to which accurate data could be collected. While the researcher ensured a consistent and neutral approach to all interviews, including during the household survey, some parts of the field research

were tainted with strong political stands with which the researcher had to temporarily agree during the time of the interview.

3.7 Secondary data sources

Secondary data sources were accessed on various occasions and with different purposes. The main purpose behind secondary data collection was linked to developing a wider understanding of the context and situation in which decision-making in the Thapathali slum area occurs. Data were accessed through government officials and NGOs workers, and a considerable amount of local literature – including reports, papers, advocacy tools, strategy papers and policy documents – was collected in tandem with the key informant interviews (**Table 3.5**). Limitations related to the local literature collected as part of this research are several, and mostly relate to the availability of information and willingness to share information on the part of key informants. These sources are therefore used in order to present the background and social context of the case study, and are quoted as such throughout the presentation of findings.

A more systematic strategy was adopted in order to access documents and newspaper articles related to the Thapathali slum eviction events. The use of newspaper data in event analysis was deemed necessary for the research as the eviction events that took place in Thapathali in May 2012 were heavily documented and subjected to significant media coverage. How newspapers and their producers regard the validity and reliability of information can be questioned although the purpose of conducting a press review has been precisely to encapsulate the public opinion related to the eviction events. Comparability of the information gathered across time and space was limited as a result of the newspaper article selection strategy which focused on pieces publishing mostly locally (national, regional and city level) ranging from May 2012 to January 2013. Online search was preferred in order to tailor the research to the topic of interest. A total of 19 articles were deemed important for the analysis, based on the following judgement criteria: (1) extent to which the newspaper article relates to the topic of interest, (2) publication in a national, regional or city newspaper, (3) reliability of the information and opinions expressed. Consequently, practical solutions aimed at minimising the problem of bias in newspaper data, namely a systematic approach to the analysis of the information collected, focusing primarily on the journalistic views and sentiment words associated to the opinions expressed.

Finally, National Census data was accessed through the Central Bureau of Statistics, and consists in data collected as part of the Living Standard Survey and Labour Survey from 2004 to 2011. These data were used for the purpose of triangulation of the local statistics collected on the Thapathali slum population, and informed the accuracy of collected data through the investigation of national patterns related to socio-demographic characteristics, economic dynamics, labour market opportunities, religion, ethnicity and migration dynamics.

Table 3.5 Secondary data sources, by unit of analysis

Type of secondary data	Description	Sources
Quantitative	Census data at national level	National Census, Living Standard Survey and Labour Survey – from Central Bureau of Statistics – 2004 / 2009 / 2011
Qualitative	Reports	Government reports and strategic papers related to slums INGO/NGO reports on slum dwellers, kinship, religion, ethnicity, discrimination, labour market
	Newspaper articles (19)	Local and international newspapers

3.8 Approach to analysis

A crucial aspect in defining the methodological approach for analysing the data relates to (1) the extent to which the collected data can inform the research questions, but most importantly to (2) the appropriateness of the tools and analytical techniques used for extracting the information from the data collected, (3) while ensuring the analysis falls in-between the pre-identified risks of (3a) under-exploring the available information, and (3b) creating statistical artefacts or misinterpreting qualitative data.

The approach taken here is an explanatory investigation of the topic of interest using the collected data as the ground for unravelling findings, using a theory-testing approach to specific components of decision-making processes. A theory-testing approach takes the stand of having an explicit theory to approach the topic of interest and draw conclusions about the 'whethers' and 'hows' of observations related to this topic. It is therefore a logic of enquiry based on a conceptual framework assumed to reflect the reality of how the mechanisms of interest occur. The conceptual framework explains how such mechanisms are expected to happen and to be observed, starting from a sequence of events and outcomes occurring in a delimited context and period of time. The assumptions and contextual factors that support the mechanisms to be observed are crucial to the extent that they serve as the ground for testing the theory under consideration. The conceptual framework is being used in a deductive way, to test an assumed causal chain or set of mechanisms provoking the outcomes observed to have happened, and the study object becomes the ground where to search for evidence supporting the causal chain or set of mechanisms.

A key idea of theory-testing approaches relates to the mechanistic perspective to determine causality and to the influence of context on these mechanisms. Context is seen as crucial in making assumptions about inference and how the different factors and determinants of a process are being articulated. The thin line between what is to be addressed as a contextual determinant and what is seen as a core factor affecting the mechanistic causation is important to draw here, and applies to the investigation of decision-making processes to the extent that multiple causes can be identified as producing or influencing the production of a specific type of outcome. As the study context has been outlined as an item under investigation *per se* as part of this research, the specific slum settings are at the centre of the mechanistic causation (1) through

the primary assumption that the slum area is a delimited space in which decision-making takes place and (2) through the secondary assumption that interpretation of causation relating to the creation and distortion of socially-constructed spaces is anchored in the *context of study*, that is the slum area. Understanding causation therefore demands from the researcher to place himself/herself in the context of study and consider it as a core factor affecting the mechanistic causation, while the later stages of the research consider the study context as the place in which the decision space, topic of interest, is produced – beyond the assumption of having the slum area as the lone determinant of the ways social spaces are being constructed. The contributions of such a study context are at the core of the research, while the further determinants of decision-making processes are drawn from the identified decision space, as illustrated below.

First phase of the methodological approach

decision space = geographical settings + social structures + ways of making a living taking place within the identified social space

Second phase of the methodological approach

decision-making processes = cognitive mechanisms + beliefs and subjective norms + contextualisation of decisions in the identified social spaces

decision practices = identification of sub-groups within the slum community + characteristics of group membership + norms and decisions of agents belonging to different sub-groups

As a result, the tools and analytical techniques used for the purpose of this research fall into a wide range of categories, and are closely related to (1) the type of data collected (although the research design informed the type of data to be collected, and not the other way round) and limitations related to the sample size and availability of other types of data, (2) the mechanisms of decision-making processes under consideration and (3) the available methods, in both quantitative and qualitative analytical researches, and their practical implications. Using the structure and articulation of the research questions, the analytical tools are presented below.

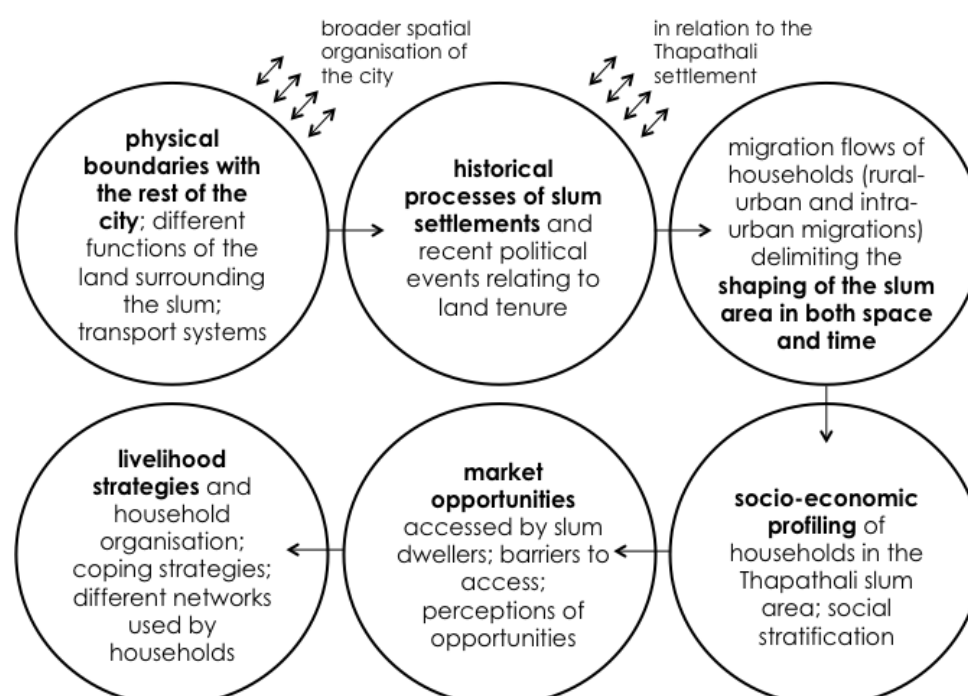
#1 Mapping the decision space

- **Mapping the slum area within the urban space:** Physical space and geographical clustering (physical boundaries with the rest of the city, different functions of the land surrounding the slum, transport systems and broader spatial organisation of the city) explored through the use of field observations and existing maps at the city level;
- **The shaping of the slum area:** Review of historical processes of slum settlements and recent political events relating to land tenure through local literature and press review;
- **Origins and migration patterns:** Migration flows of households as recorded during the household survey, including both rural-urban and intra-urban migrations, delimiting the shaping of the slum area in both space and time;
- **Mapping the socio-economic landscape of the city and the labour market:** Socio-economic spatial organisation of the city, using income data for stratifying the urban

population and secondary data for understanding the clustering of labour functions/market segmentation in different areas of Kathmandu;

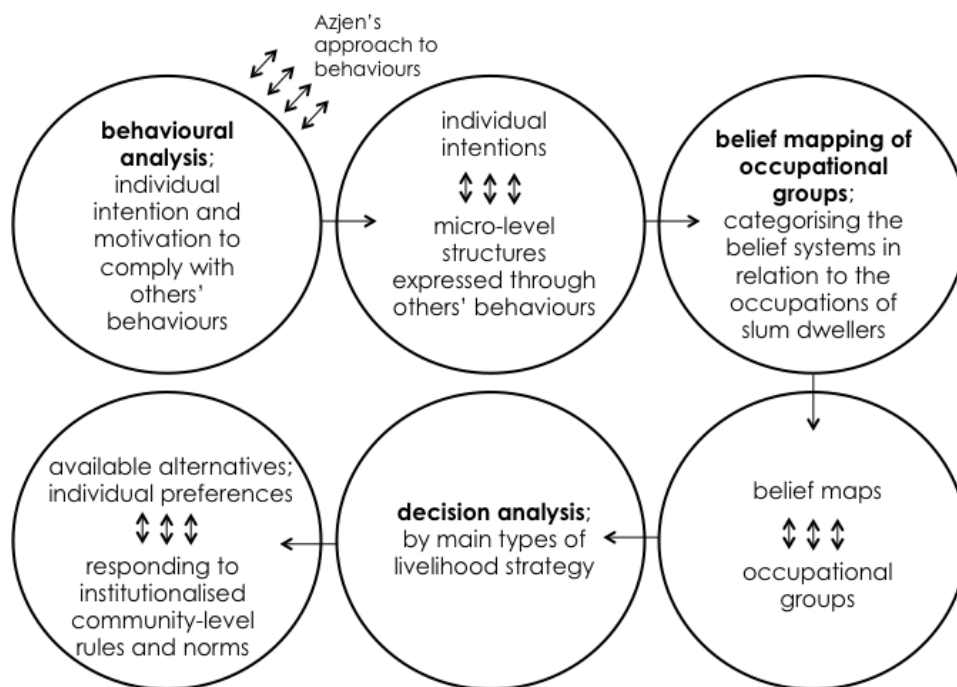
- **Mapping poverty within the Thapathali slum area:** Socio-economic profiling of the Thapathali slum area using household level data on (1) household economics and periods of hardship, (2) household members' activities, monthly income and assets/durable goods, (3) interview content relating to social stratification within the slum area;
- **Access and barriers to opportunities for slum dwellers:** Using household level data collected as primary data, mapping of the formal and informal market opportunities accessed by slum dwellers; mapping of transport data and place of work at the level of slum dwellers; mapping of socio-demographic aspects linked to different types of activities in which slum dwellers are mostly involved; mapping of perceived barriers relating to opportunities as expressed by slum dwellers;
- **Household economics and coping strategies:** Mapping of most common livelihood strategies and household structural organisation regarding how to make a living; mapping of coping strategies in situations of hardship; identification of strategy types relating to making a living and cross-tabulations with socio-demographic aspects; and
- **Social network analysis and mapping of information flows:** Mapping of the different networks used by households within the Thapathali slum area, within Kathmandu and within the rest of the country in order to get information about economic opportunities and housing prospects.

Figure 3.6 Mapping the decision space



- **Behavioural analysis** (individual intention and motivation to comply): Beliefs and intentions expressed during interviews were explored using Ajzen's approach to behaviours as being influenced by micro-level social structures;
- **Belief mapping of occupational groups:** Using interview content collected as part of the household survey, belief maps were created using a quantitative textual coding approach aiming at categorising the belief systems in relation to the different activities carried out by slum dwellers; and
- **Decision analysis by main types of livelihood strategy:** Decision analysis followed the identification of step-by-step processes, from the type of information about available alternatives to preferences and goals individuals set for themselves while responding to institutionalised community-level rules and norms.

Figure 3.7 Understanding decision-making processes related to making a living



A discourse analysis approach

Throughout the analysis, a discourse analysis approach was taken in order to make sense of the material collected during the fieldwork (interviews with slum dwellers, with key informants, local literature and newspapers). Atlas.ti was used as the main software for coding interview contents and mapping belief systems. Key informant interviews were coded in Atlas.ti based on identified themes relating to social constructs in order to build a belief system representative of key informant views. Similarly, local literature and NGO reports were used in order to construct a belief map capturing a more general and commonly accepted view of the topic of interest. Discourse analysis was used as the methodology for identifying the meanings of local actors through the double lens of social constructionism and linguistics. As

postmodern theories give a conceptualisation of the world which allows a meaningful interpretation of belief systems, social science research has drawn closer to deconstructing concepts, social values and various assumptions embedded in socially constructed actors' discourses. According to MacLure (2003: 43), "(...) *analysing texts involves much more than attending to whatever is in those texts. (...) The point is not to get the text to lay bare its meanings (or its prejudices), but to trace some of the threads that connect that text to others*". The result aimed at expanding the researcher's knowledge of unacknowledged agendas and motivations of local actors.

Discourse Analysis for social research therefore comprises different stages in order to unpack agendas and unconscious assumptions of the discourse agents. Discourse codes expressed in spoken words encompass argumentative strategies, figurative meanings, presuppositions and expectations, along with individual and group identities, social structures and power relations. Discovering patterns can be achieved using word frequencies and semantic prosody, as well as themes quantification through text annotation. Beyond recurrent themes and content words, the structure of the text itself and markers of logical progression provide information about the conceptual frames which give the actor a foundation for making sense of the world. Lakoff (1987) describes frames as being structured around four principles: references structure, image schemas, metaphorical mapping and metonymic mapping.

Quantitative textual coding approach

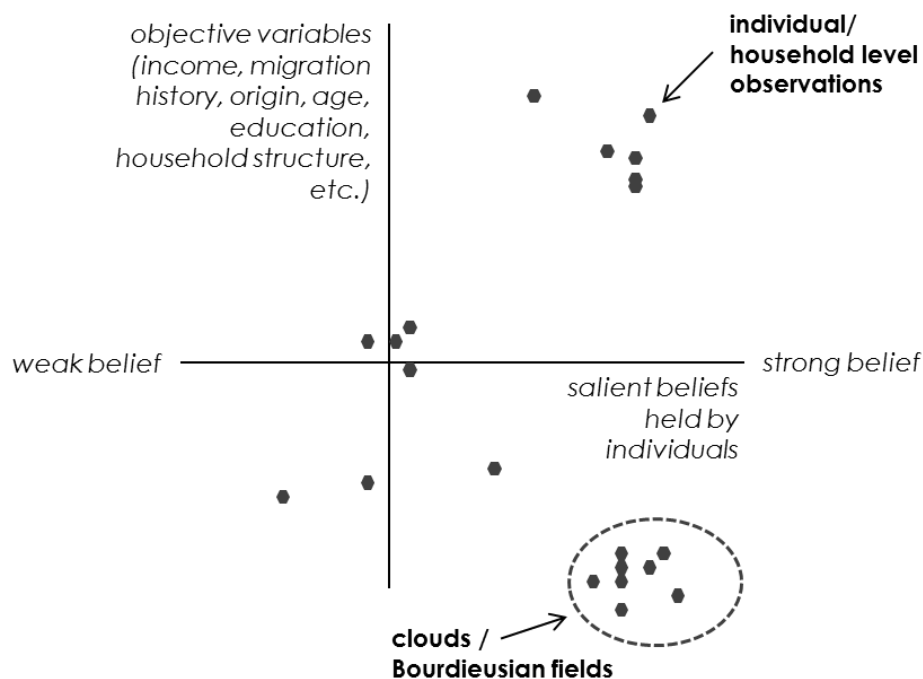
Measuring the relationships between world-views – defined by Frank (1977: 27) as "*highly structured, complex, interacting set of values, expectations, and images of oneself and others, which guide and in turn are guided by a person's perceptions and behaviours and which are closely related to their emotional states and feelings of well-being*" – was achieved through the use of quantitative textual coding, which showed which factors/types of beliefs yielded the most significant results in terms of being at the centre of the belief maps under consideration. In addition to a qualitative discourse analysis approach, this methodology helped weighting the significance of each social construct presented in the belief maps, identifying the extent to which micro-level institutions and local social structures played a role in delimiting the space for decision-making.

Belief maps were built using either interview transcripts or local press articles. The circles represent the main themes by average size of occurrence in slum dwellers' and key informants' interviews, illustrative quotes are attached to the main themes according to their recurrence in the different discourses. Red is used in places where such themes were associated with negative sentiment words and the strength of the links connecting the different sub-themes is depicted using either plain lines (strong link) or dotted lines (weak link).

- **Bourdieuian fields' analysis and correspondence between objective structures and normative systems:** To delimit and divide the different spaces for decision-making based on the different belief maps, correlation analysis was conducted using perception data collected with slum dwellers, in order to demarcate Bourdieusian 'fields' (Figures 3.8 and 3.9), i.e. sub-structures with a relative autonomy from the larger social structure.

The methodological approach used for this purpose is adapted from Bourdieu's quantification of his Theory of Practice, and follows a four-staged process. As shown on Figure 3.7, the preliminary analysis (0) consisted in mapping the worldviews and beliefs held by individuals as part of the exploratory approach to decision-making processes, while the explanatory approach now aims at establishing the correspondence between objective structures and salient beliefs (1). The identification of Bourdieusian fields (2) is a crucial step involving the sociological interpretation of correlations observed between objective structures and salient beliefs held by individuals. While some beliefs are shared at the wider community level, it appears that worldviews are also shaped by more objective characteristics such as belonging to a low income group, or highly educated group. While agents may not be aware of their affiliation to such groups, the exercise of mapping the existing correspondences between objective structures and salient beliefs reveals the existence of habitus systems which can be understood as sets of structured dispositions, predefined scripts or static codes by which individual strategies abide within a certain field (low education group, migration origin group, etc.). Bourdieusian fields are therefore explored through a mapping of the degree of homothety between objective structures and normative systems, allowing a categorisation of worldviews in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and an in-depth understanding of how these worldviews are 'practiced' and 'negotiated' by agents within each field (3).

Figure 3.8 Correlation analysis establishing the correspondence between structures and beliefs

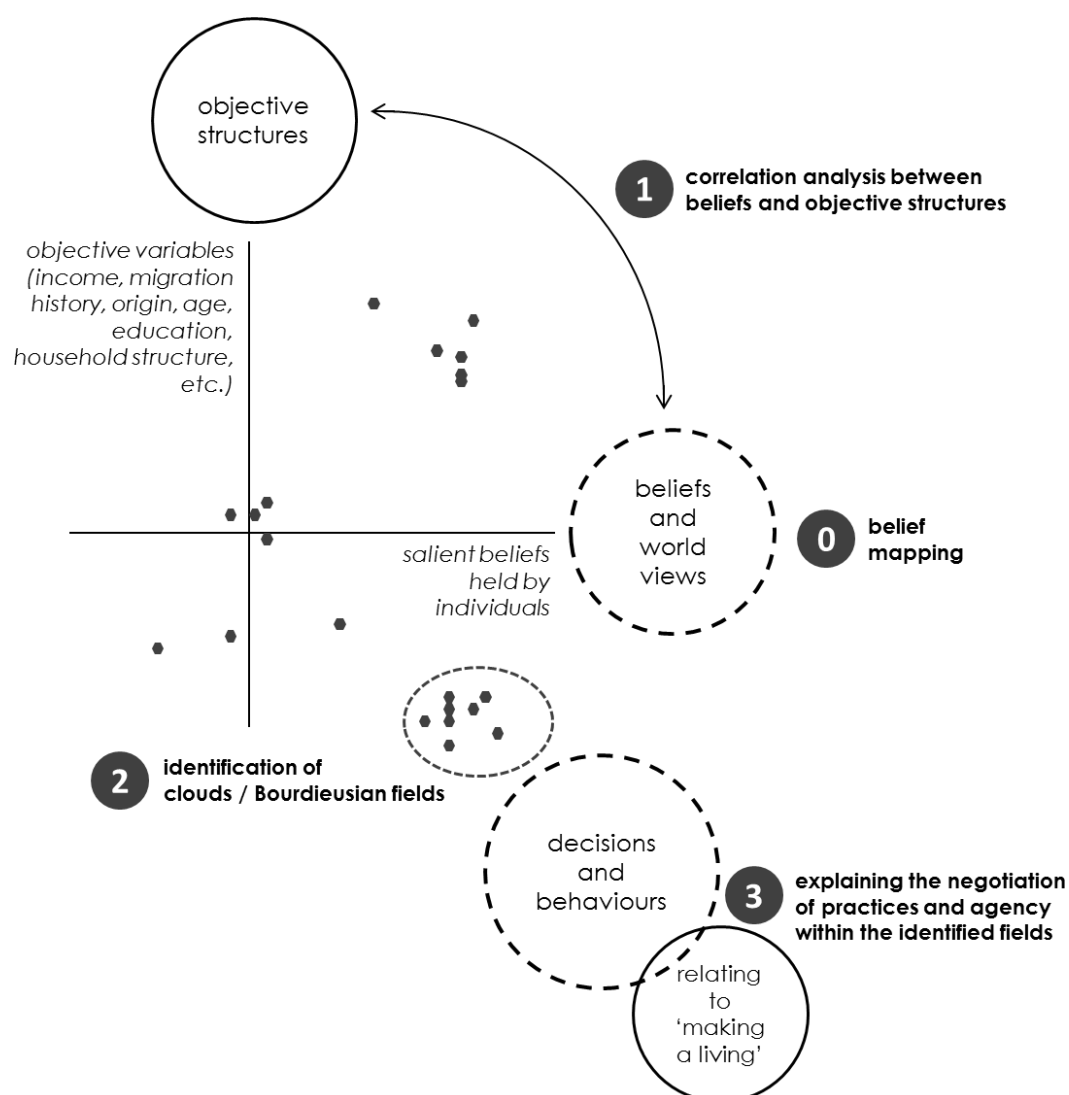


Correlation analysis between objective structures and salient beliefs

Using perception data from the household survey during which perceived norms and beliefs were measured using a Likert scale from 1 (– Strongly agree) to 5 (– Strongly disagree), reasons given by slum dwellers regarding their choice of occupation or livelihood strategy are explored for each of the following categories: financial aspects, money/ success aspects, security and sustainability aspects, education/ skills aspects, physical work aspects, geographical location aspects, absence of choice aspects, imitative strategies aspects, membership norms aspects, religious/ethnic aspects, kinship influence aspects, job competition aspects, social classes and poverty differences aspects. The purpose of the following graphical representations⁷⁷ is to present the homotheties between different objective characteristics and different beliefs held by slum dwellers, whereby fields are identified and explored as spaces in which norms are being produced and maintained.

⁷⁷ Compiled using perception data from household survey. Percentages do not add up to 100% as the “Do not know” category is not presented on the graphs. The Likert scale is represented on the horizontal axis, from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”, each marker on the axis representing one step on the scale. The vertical axis encompasses several dimensions and therefore several scales; each dimension (e.g. percentage of total households holding belief) is represented in proportion to the distance between each observation within this dimension.

Figure 3.9 Staged-process to analysing the correspondence between objective structures/fields and salient beliefs



Further methodological notes

The variable 'monthly income per capita' was calculated using the OECD-modified equivalence scale⁷⁸. The Statistical Office of the European Union adopted the OECD-modified equivalence scale in the late 1990s, which assigns a value of 1 to the household head, of 0.5 to each additional adult member and of 0.3 to each child. This scale has been chosen against the former OECD-scale since the equivalence elasticity of the latter was very high compared to the economies of scale in consumption a household can achieve. It is well understood that the choice of a particular equivalence scale depends on value judgements; however, by ignoring scale economies, especially in poor countries, which tend to have disproportionate household size, aggregate poverty may be overestimated.

Inverse probability weighting was used in order to address the bias in the selection of respondents. Although random selection was achieved at the household level, the study sample

⁷⁸ Refer to www.oecd.org/eo/growth/OECD-Note-EquivalenceScales.pdf

at the respondent level has a selection bias relating to household members' availability and who was designated as respondent by other household members. Weights were therefore applied at the respondent level, capturing the inverse probability of being selected as part of the total population of household members/ individuals surveyed. Inverse probability weighting was calculated using the inverse of the sampling fraction – inverse of 50 respondents out of 236 potential respondents.

The purpose of conducting a triangulation of data sources using National Census data was to identify and explain – where possible – the similarities and differences between the collected data and the National Census data accessed through the Central Bureau of Statistics. As a result, comparative tables were produced and aimed at showing the quality of the data collected at the slum level compared to variations observed in the National Census statistics. These tables are presented and discussed in **Chapters 4** and **5**, and additional tables can be found in **Annex E**. A summary of the methodological approach for data analysis is presented in **Table 3.10**.

Table 3.10 Summary of the methodological approach for data analysis

Phase and objective	Type of analysis	Data used for the analysis
<i>Phase 1: The decision space</i>		
Mapping exercise: Investigating strategies related to making a living	Descriptive analysis	Household survey
	Discourse analysis	Key informant interviews and interviews with slum dwellers
	Contextual analysis	Field observations and secondary data sources
<i>Phase 2: Decision-making processes and decision practices</i>		
Normative analysis: How norms influence decision-making processes	Behavioural analysis (individual intention and motivation to comply)	Household survey and interviews with slum dwellers
	Belief mapping by occupational groups	
	Decision-making mapping by main type of livelihood strategy	
Decision practices within and between groups from the perspective of sharing similar characteristics	Bourdieuian fields' analysis and correspondences between objective structures and normative systems	Household survey and slum dwellers' perception survey

4. Case study presentation: Thapathali slum area, Kathmandu, Nepal

The objective of this chapter is to present the case study this research uses to build hypotheses, test theories and generate findings; an in-depth presentation of the different features and characteristics of the context of study is introduced before getting to the core of the analysis in the following chapters. As underlined in the methodology chapter, the case study approach is used in order to narrow down the field of research⁷⁹. As a result, this detailed contextual presentation serves as a background for reference in the later stages of this research, and aims to unpack the linkages between 'real-world' phenomena and their interpretations from both the researcher's standpoint and the study population's worldviews⁸⁰.

The primary focus of the contextual presentation is situated at the country level, after which a detailed account of the migration, housing and employment logics is given by narrowing down the effects of country-level dynamics at the level of the Kathmandu Valley, eventually exploring the 'place' and 'function' of the Thapathali slum area within these wider dynamics. Beyond what can be identified as a 'snapshot'-like presentation of the context, the aim is to define the features of the case study against a range of chronologies, encompassing both the events and the conditions that led everyday life to be shaped in the context of 'permanent temporariness'. As a result, the history of the Thapathali settlement is explored through the lens of landownership debates and the social meanings of squatting in the Kathmandu Valley, as the making of the slum area under consideration has been primarily articulated around housing dynamics, spatial configuration of the city and access to land.

While the different aspects of the local economy of Thapathali as a central city location are touched upon in this chapter, the primary angle for presenting the case study revolves mainly around the narrative of the spontaneous slum settlement, squatting identities, relationships with local authorities and the building of a shared space. By focusing on the eviction events in Thapathali and their consequences, this chapter also aims to clarify how the slum area emerged from the sharing of events, and explores the resulting consequences for micro-level social

⁷⁹ Refer to Chapter 3. The rationale for a case study as core research evidence of the research can be explained through the necessity of an in-depth study of the research problem, and the limited availability of researchable examples in which the research problem can be observed. The case study approach is used here in order to narrow down the field of research into a comprehensive case, in order to test a specific theory in a 'workable' and sizeable space – the geographically delimited slum area. The case study design is particularly useful in order to understand the complex mechanisms of decision-making processes, thereby achieved through detailed contextual analysis of a delimited social space, affected by a researchable set of events and conditions.

⁸⁰ Refer to Chapter 3. The added value of formalising social reality through an in-depth analysis of the case study is multi-folded: first, the value of addressing the complexities of social worlds by listing all aspects of them in a systematic way and thereby avoiding a biased focus on some salient categories of social reality, and second, the value of accounting for the relational aspects of social worlds through the modelling of different views of the world (the researcher's or the study population's) and their constant interactions.

structures. Through the unpacking of the context of study, this research enhances the understanding of a convoluted list of different factors, therefore allowing the analysis of the complex mechanisms of decision-making processes to be built into a 'graspable' and 'workable' case in the later stages.

4.1 The Kathmandu Valley: A fast urbanising metropolitan region in South Asia

Nepal presents interesting patterns of urbanisation that are currently undergoing major transformations. The pathway towards becoming an urbanised economy has been an emerging feature of the Nepalese economy over the past two decades, and came as an abrupt transformative process as the Kathmandu Valley became one of the fastest-growing metropolitan regions in South Asia (World Bank 2013). Rapid urbanisation patterns have been coupled with new dynamics in Nepal's economic development, and the country's primary concern has been to cope with the competitiveness aspects of its urban economy, which attracts rural populations to urban centres. Depicted as a "*critical juncture*" (World Bank 2013: 7) for Nepal, the urbanisation process is deeply transformative for the country, and the accelerating urban economic growth is not solely visible in the main urban centres such as the Kathmandu Valley, but intensively influences the demographic, social and cultural trends in the rural areas of Nepal.

Urbanisation context

While Nepal remains the least urbanised country in the South Asian region, having less than one fifth of its population living in urban centres, the country has stood out in recent decades as the fastest-urbanising geographical part of South Asia with a 6% annual growth rate of its urban population over the past 40 years (UNDESA 2012). While experiencing a spatial demographic transition that is similar to most developing countries, the pace at which Nepal is entering its urbanisation 'race' has led to remarkable changes but also unintended or unforeseen consequences which are proving difficult to manage for the government and planning authorities. Beyond the demographic transition and its accompanying spatial transformations in both urban and rural areas, transformations are still on-going in the economic sphere, with urban centres now accounting for over two-thirds of the Nepalese gross domestic product (GDP) – compared to only one third in the 1970s (World Bank 2011).

Urbanisation is taking place in a critical environment, both from the political and economic perspectives, as the country underwent major political events since the 1970s, namely a civil conflict which lasted from 1996 until 2006 leading to an uncompetitive business setting that prevented the development of the private sector and the establishment of strong linkages with the international economic sphere (Afram and Salvi Del Pero 2012). As a national economy largely depending on remittances, the features of the Nepalese economy have failed to create the appropriate conditions for national economic growth, which both resulted from and entailed further disadvantages linked to the limited infrastructures that did not support the growth of a productive national economy. Inability to conduct both national and local elections is intrinsically linked to the poor economic performances of the country, as the demographic and migration

trends demonstrate that political instability, coupled with limited opportunities for a productive economy within the boundaries of the country, have led the productive workforce out of Nepal. This entails heavy reliance on other countries' labour markets and international economic indicators. Remittance flows still amount to a large share of GDP, having as a consequence an increasing exposure of Nepali workers, their families and the national economy to the effects of the 'Dutch Disease'⁸¹, furthering the pattern towards limited national competitiveness as Nepal engaged in relying on other economies rather than its own. While international private investments remain limited in the country (Afram and Salvi Del Pero 2012), the bulk of the Nepalese private sector has stagnated and failed to engage in exporting commodities or services.

The drivers of growth affecting Nepal's urban centres, particularly the Kathmandu metropolitan area, have therefore consisted in the development of comparative advantage in three strategic areas: cultural tourism services, handicrafts, and agro processing (World Bank 2013). For these three sectors, the economic drivers have been closely related to the export potential on international markets and the potential for local economic development through resultant job creations at regional level. Nepal's cities have been the core areas in which such drivers could entail an uptake in economic growth, while the national cultural heritage stood as a tangible asset whose strategic management could result in the creation of a competitive cultural sector. Both the production of traditional handicraft products and agro products have been based on exploiting the comparative advantages of Nepal as a standalone and resourceful country in terms of culture and heritage, and cultural tourism was therefore identified as a core service sector, with high expectations regarding growth impact on the national economy (Nepal Trade Integration Strategy 2010, Government of Nepal 2010). Tourism could further be established as an alternative to a remittance-led economy, and has been a crucial sector for the national economy since the 1950s. Tourism induces a diversification in GDP sources along with an opportunity to include other groups of the national workforce at diverse levels, as the tourism sector encompasses job creation for a wide range of functions, potentially contributing to poverty reduction. While past political events prevented the full expansion of this economic sector, the stabilisation process has permitted a return to a steady increase in international tourism⁸².

The tourism industry

The Kathmandu Valley is one of the densest areas in terms of cultural monuments and UNESCO protected sites. Consisting in seven protected monument areas, the UNESCO Kathmandu Valley World Heritage site has witnessed an increasing number of visits since the 1970s, although the resulting tourism experience has remained limited due to the steady or even declining quality of the surrounding infrastructures, both in terms of transportation and commercial infrastructures. Effects of poorly monitored population growth resulted in limited commercial development and increasing pressure as part of the exploitation of Nepal's cultural heritage. Nevertheless, handicraft production rose as a sector with opportunities for every citizen

⁸¹ In economics, the Dutch disease is the observed relationship between the increase in the economic development of natural resources and a decline in the manufacturing sector (or agriculture). In the case of Nepal, economists are referring to remittance-induced Dutch disease effects.

⁸² Detailed explanations about the tourism industry are given below.

to take part in the cultural tourist industry, and the development of handcraft production centres has followed a labour intensive model over the past 30 years, with some fluctuations linked to the civil conflict which affected the tourist industry⁸³. Accounting for 6% of Nepal's GDP (World Bank 2013), handicraft production is closely tied to the tourism industry and reflects Nepali cultural traditions that can be dated back to centuries ago. As a result, traditional skills, closely embedded in the social functions and caste groups of the Nepali society, are found and expressed at various levels and within different social groups, based on the cultural attributes of each ethnic or religious category. On the one hand, the craft industry plays a functional role in defining statuses in the social hierarchy and the Nepali society, while on the other hand most handicraft products are highly recognised and reputed on international markets, which furthers the potentialities for international exports and the development of a competitive, national-driven market (Trade and Export Promotion Centre 2008).

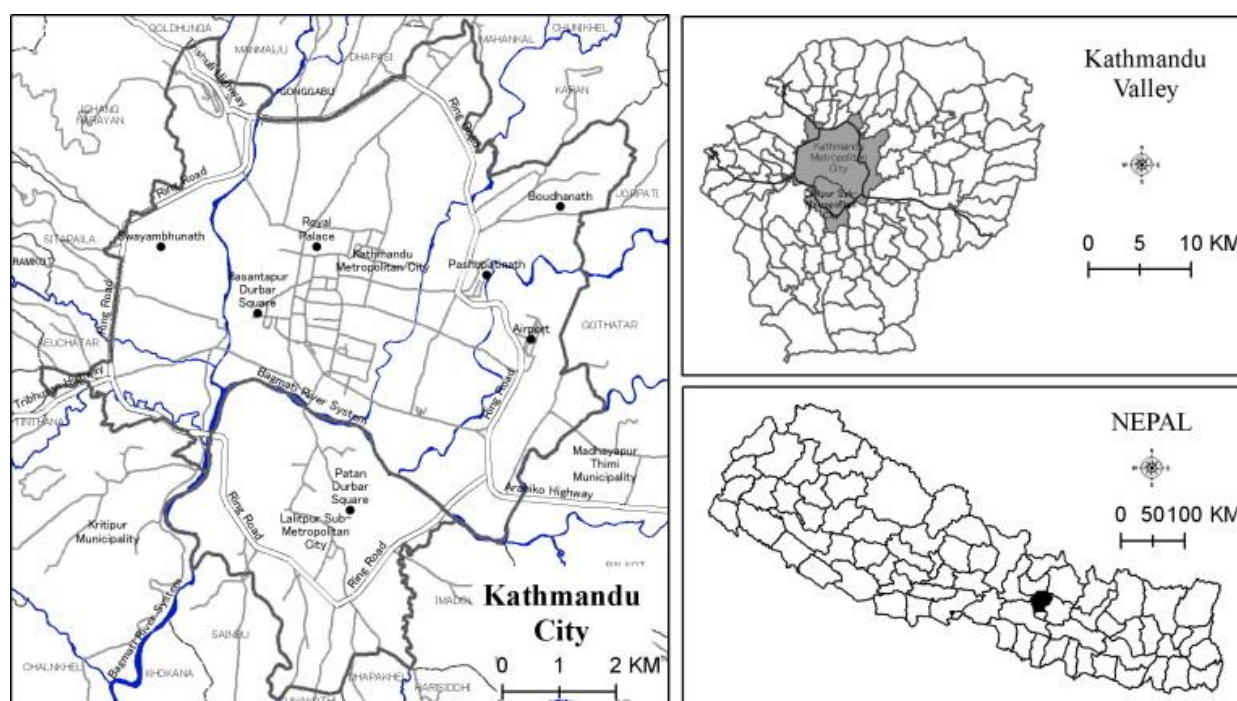
As traditional products tend to be coupled with new products reflecting the tourist demand and new interpretations of a centuries-old cultural heritage⁸⁴, urban centres have emerged as a natural place for retailing and selling functions to be established, and the domestic handicraft market has expanded to a wide array of job opportunities for the Nepalese urbanites to seize. While more local handicraft clusters have emerged in less central locations than the Kathmandu metropolitan area, artisans tend to migrate to urban centres to get closer to the location of wholesalers and direct sales centres for tourists. Nevertheless, the potentialities of the handicraft sector have to be nuanced as the export competitiveness of the craft industry has not yet reached the full extent of its expected promises and remains largely driven by in-country tourist demand (World Bank 2013). The difficulties in organising a functional market and coordinating the various actors and players having a stake in both the production and retailing functions of the sector are several, and mainly relate to the limitations in modernising an economic sector faced with the rigor and strategic demands of international competition. The observed steadiness in international exports (Trade and Export Promotion Centre 2012) can be attributed to the inability to effectively market and brand products, as both artisans and retailers point out their limited access to initial capital or microcredit, in addition to conflicted relationships between small-scale wholesalers and international exporters. The limited bargaining power of some sections of the population engaged in the craft sector has proven to be one of the main impediments for the handicraft sector to fully exploit the benefits of an inclusive growth integrating different segments of the population, from individual artisans to large export enterprises (ILO 2011). Further aspects of the observed market failures can be attributed to Nepal's infrastructures as to access to power or water, which still represent significant barriers,

⁸³ According to Shrestha and Shrestha (2012: 62), "(...) sound growth has been recorded in Nepal's tourism industry in the past five decades with the number of tourists visiting the country growing from 6,179 in 1962 to 6,02,867 in the year 2010. Since 1962, Department of Tourism had started maintaining the statistics of tourism and the number of foreign visitors to Nepal has been increasing every year since the beginning year, 1962, except in the years 1965, 1981, 1984, 1989, 1993, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2005 and 2008".

⁸⁴ According to the Trade and Export Promotion Centre, the export of Nepalese handicrafts started from the mid 60's of the last century. However, the systematic export started only from early 70's. Handicrafts have long been a major line of Nepalese exports. Currently, it has been the largest overseas export item of the country next to readymade garments and carpets. More than 20 handicraft products mainly the pashmina products, woollen goods, silver jewellery, Nepalese handmade paper and paper products, metal craft, wood craft, cotton goods etc. are being exported to about 85 countries. USA (which alone absorbs around 25% of the total export of handicraft products), Britain, India, Canada, Germany, Japan, Italy, France, Australia, Netherlands and China are its major foreign buyers.

even in the major urban centres of Nepal. Fierce competition with neighbouring countries such as China and India (World Bank 2013) can be explained as a result of these limiting factors, and by a lack of capacity from Nepalese authorities and the private sector to respond to the basic infrastructural needs of the country. While infrastructure development could have followed the uptake of the handicraft and tourism sectors as major drivers of the national economy, the variety of actors engaged in these sectors failed to support international exports as a result of limited coordination. Transforming the natural resources and cultural heritage into driving sectors for the national economy has therefore proved complicated, although insufficient infrastructures have turned out to be less of an obstacle in urban centres such as the Kathmandu Valley. Market coordination and low productivity due to limited use of technology have had a similar impact on the agro processing sector, which still plays an important role when located nearby urban centres, mostly clustered in the Tarai and Central Hills of the country (ILO 2011).

Figure 4.1 Kathmandu City and the Kathmandu Valley within the context of Nepal



Source: Thapa (2008)

A critical pattern affecting the Kathmandu metropolitan area can therefore be conceptualised in terms of a changing economy, and most importantly of a changing spatial economy, demonstrating the level of interconnection between new economic trends and the spatial reconfigurations of the Kathmandu Valley. As a general pattern, nonfarm activities have taken the lead in terms of driving the economy in the Kathmandu Valley compared to rural areas, with 82% of the overall economic activities being nonfarm-related in the metropolitan area. The main pattern in Nepal's spatial economy indicates a very clear distinction between nonfarm employment taking place in the urban areas and farm activities being concentrated in the more distant and rural parts of the country (Fafchamps and Shilpi 2002). The Kathmandu Valley being the major cluster for nonfarm employment, significant changes have been witnessed in the area as a result of the changing patterns in the cultural tourism industry and the handicraft sector.

These changes have been accompanied by transformations in the spatial geography of the service sector, which now contributes to half of Nepal's GDP against a quarter only 30 years ago (World Bank 2011).

Manufacturing employment

One of the main reasons for the resulting spatial change is linked to the concept of agglomeration economies, as individuals tend to migrate and organise their livings around clusters where tourism activities and access to financial services are located. The urban core of the Kathmandu Valley concentrates 41% of service activities in total (**Figures 4.2 and 4.3**), as service employment became one of the most important drivers of the spatial reconfiguration and associated migration trends towards the Kathmandu metropolitan area (World Bank 2013). As trading services emerged as a pool of livelihood opportunities for the population, Kathmandu therefore became an attractive urban centre for rural populations struggling with farm employment in the remote areas of Nepal or driven away due to the decade-long civil conflict. Service employment also encompasses job opportunities within the public administration and related social services. Regarding the manufacturing sector, Kathmandu concentrates most of the manufacturing employment (around 40% of overall manufacturing employment (World Bank 2013)) as a result of the connections between manufacturing and services. While manufacturing consists in small-scale industries, the conditions for creating economic value are closely linked to the proximity to urban centres and relates to the strategic positioning of these industries that tend to factor in the limited access to functional infrastructures. Despite a relatively low performance of the manufacturing sector since 2002 (**Figure 4.3**), the current migration patterns towards the Kathmandu Valley are still explained by employment opportunities in manufacturing, as illustrated by an increase in the number of small manufacturing firms over the past 10 years in the area (World Bank 2013).

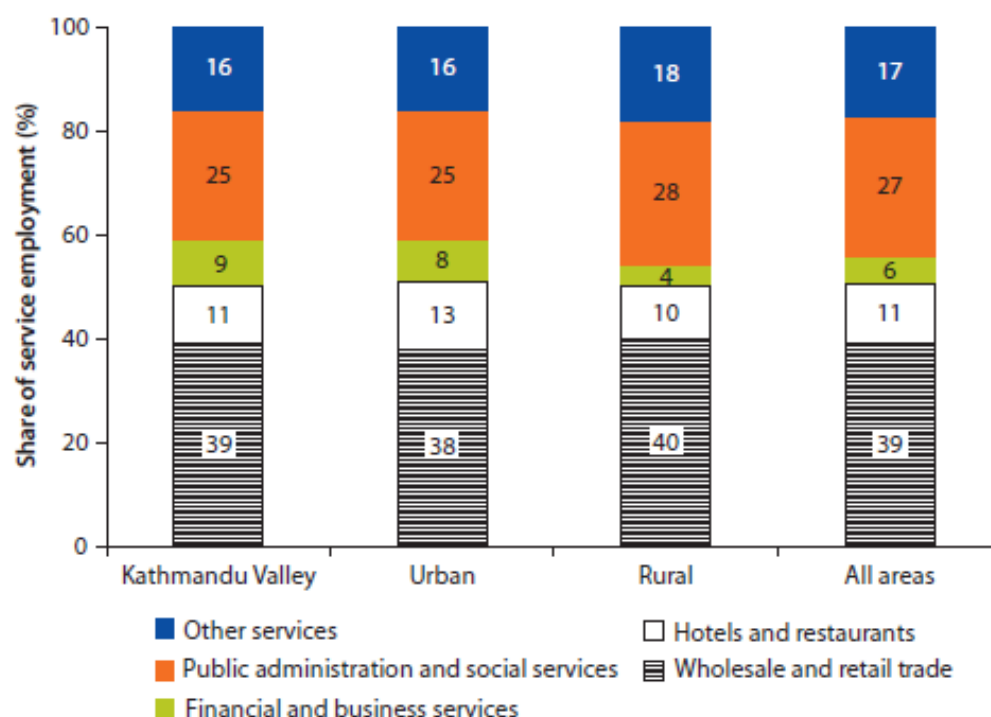
Looking at the long-term drivers of Kathmandu employment market's attractiveness, the ready-made garment industry played a significant although now diminished role in shaping the spatial reconfiguration of the Valley. Before 2000, the ready-made garment industry was considered as the most competitive sector in Nepal, being ranked as the top export. As a result of the ending of the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Textiles and Clothing in 2004, which limited the exports to the US market, Nepal experienced a sharp decline in the garment industry's exports (**Figure 4.3**), with employment in the industry dropping from 23% in 2003 to 6% in 2007 (CBS 2003; CBS 2007). The resulting dependency on fabrics and other raw materials from countries such as India and China, and the rising competitive advantage of these countries on the international market, led to a 30% decline in Nepal's garment industry employment between 2003 and 2007 (CBS 2003; CBS 2007; refer to **Figure 4.3**), leaving a significant number of factory workers who had migrated to work in the ready-made garment industry unemployed – with effects trickling down to those engaged in street vending activities (clothing) as well.

The construction sector

Finally, in the specific case of the Kathmandu Valley, another important sector affecting the urbanisation context has been the construction sector, as large construction projects have been established in various parts of the Kathmandu Valley over the past two decades. According

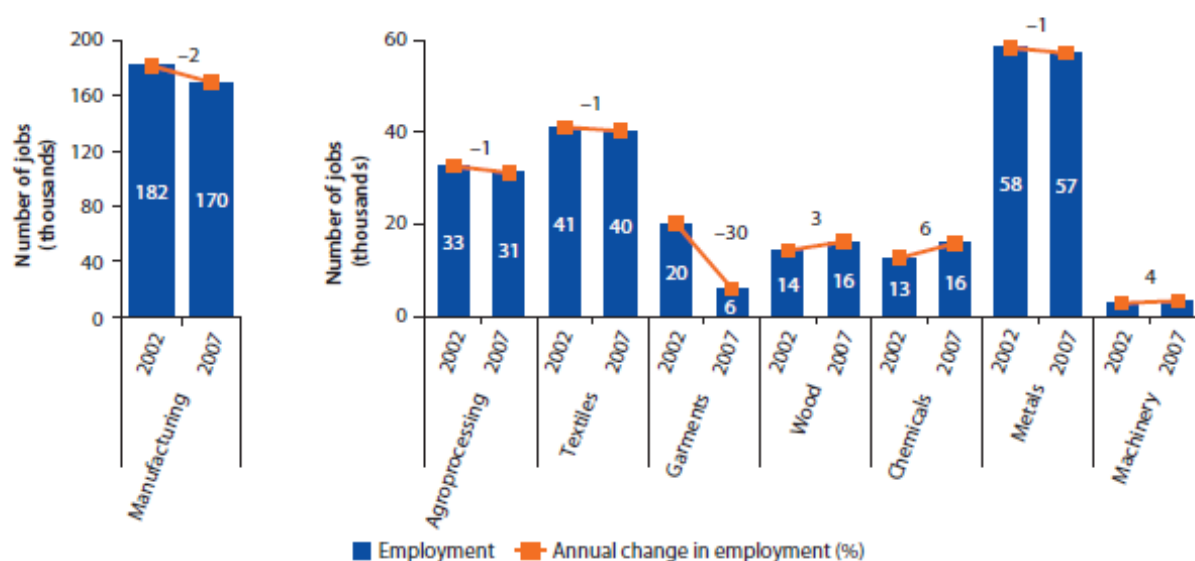
to the Federation of Contractors Association of Nepal (FCAN), Nepali workers contribute two thirds of the total demand in this sector, and the unmet demand is attracting workers from abroad, namely India. Matching the demand and supply of the construction sector workforce has therefore proven difficult, and the increasing influx of internal migration from the rural areas to the Kathmandu metropolitan area has been faced with a situation in which Nepali workers' skill set is often too limited within the pool of unskilled construction workers. Management of the labour force is a looming issue for the local authorities and organisations such as the Council for Technical Education & Vocational Training (CTEVT), as the increasing population pressure in the Kathmandu Valley and the pull factor of low skilled opportunities on construction sites have led to a situation where new migrants struggle to find relevant job opportunities. Strategic employment training has been introduced by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, but remains an area for improvement for training to create steady employment and support unskilled construction workers while integrating the increasing number of low skilled migrants from the rural areas in the Kathmandu Valley's labour market.

Figure 4.2 Composition of employment in the service sector in Nepal (2008)



Source: Labour Force Survey 2008 (CBS 2009)

Figure 4.3 Manufacturing employment and growth in Nepal, by sector (2002-07)



Source: Census of manufacturing 2002 and 2007 (CBS 2003; CBS 2007)

Note: Analysis includes firms with more than 10 employees.

4.2 Spatial patterns of Kathmandu's rapid urbanisation: Internal migration as a driving force of urban change

While the Kathmandu Valley has undergone a process of rapid urbanisation mostly linked to a changing economy at the country level, the demographic transition also had a significant impact on the spatial patterns affecting the capital city of Nepal. The overall population growth of the country has slowed down over the past 10 years, while the urban population growth rate kept a steady annual pace of 3.4% between 2001 and 2011 (World Bank 2013). The Kathmandu Valley is triggering this number, with a 4% annual growth rate (World Bank 2013, largely driven by internal migration⁸⁵ and leading to a reconversion of the suburban areas and towns within an integrated urban system anchored at the Valley level. Overall, the Kathmandu Valley's population amounts to one third of the total population of Nepal, and the population growth is resulting in rapid urban sprawling in the peripheral areas of the bowl-shaped valley. While the peri-urban areas are still classified as rural areas, the population growth taking place in the Valley's urban agglomeration has entailed a significant reshaping of the spatial economy and activities carried out in the urban region. Change in land use has encompassed urban-like characteristics, although a number of areas in the Kathmandu Valley, including in more central urban settlements, still reflect a predominance of rural features and rural economic activities.

⁸⁵ The inflow of rural migrants to urban areas represents 45% of Nepal's urban population. Lifetime net migration to the Kathmandu Valley, estimated at 419,000 people in 2008, is more than twice the net level of migration to any other urban region (World Bank 2013).

Patterns of internal migration

The Kathmandu metropolitan area as a migration destination is not a new feature of the migration patterns taking place in Nepal. While the population has been increasing in the core area of the city since the 1960s, the first large scale influx of migrants from the rural areas only took place after the end of the Rana period⁸⁶ (1951), during which internal migration was restricted and subjected to obtaining a visa to enter and leave the Kathmandu Valley. The trends over the past decades show that migrants are increasingly moving for economic reasons, as part of a permanent resettling strategy and tend to migrate from more distant regions in Nepal than previously recorded. Lifetime urban migration is largely triggered by the search for better employment opportunities, along with attraction for education facilities and opportunities for training offered by the capital city. Both these pull factors account for one third of the reasons for lifetime urban migration (CBS 1999; CBS 2009), while the Kathmandu Valley acts as a gravity centre for those who decide to move from far away regions. Long-distance migration is only envisaged to the growing economic areas of the country, Kathmandu offering the highest chances of finding work opportunities as compared to other urban centres in Nepal. The Valley therefore concentrates a high number of new lifetime migrants every year, and internal migration has been a powerful factor shaping urban change.

Internal migration entails an expansion of urban centres which has acted as a driver of urban transformations in the Kathmandu Valley – a pattern that has been exacerbated over the past years. While a significant barrier to migration remains long distance and lack of connectivity or transport infrastructures in remote rural areas, the recent composition of the Valley's population has been influenced by the arrival and integration of migrants coming from various linguistic, ethnic or religious backgrounds, demonstrating that the 'social distance' (World Bank 2013) that might affect the migration decision is less important in the decision-making processes of the recent migration waves. Both push and pull factors tend to influence internal migration, although a solid pattern observed as part of the internal migration influx over the past decades seems to strongly integrate expectations of searching better living conditions, regardless of the type of activities or housing solutions migrants are faced with upon their arrival. While pull factors involve expectations related to employment and educational opportunities, exposure to better living conditions or access to primary commodities such clothing or food items (Fafchamps and Shilpi 2009), push factors are closely linked to the search of better living standards as rural areas lack all of the above-mentioned opportunities, services or commodity markets. As a result, in most cases, reasons put forward as explanatory factors of the migration decision are about finding somewhere else the opportunities, the products and the services that cannot be accessed in the remote and rural areas of Nepal. Other forces have been acting as internal migration drivers, such as push factors relating to social conditions governing rural life – an aspect mainly influencing female internal migration as the female rate of lifetime migration is twice as high as the male rate, as of 2001 (CBS 2009). Finally, another significant push factor has been dominating the migration decisions taken in the rural areas after the 1990s and relates to the decade-long civil conflict.

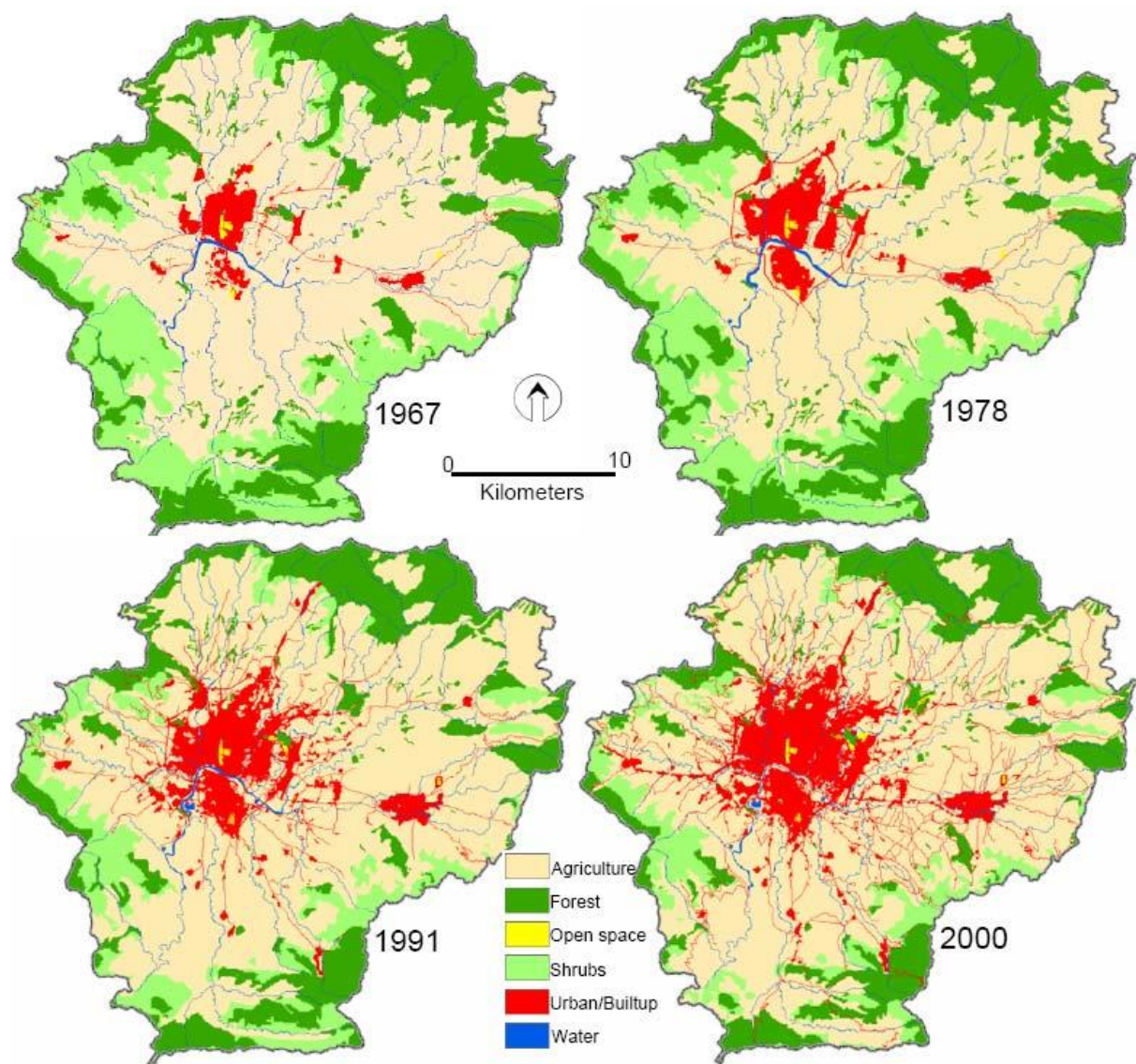
⁸⁶ The Rana dynasty was a Hindu Rajput dynasty which ruled the Kingdom of Nepal from 1846 until 1951, reducing the Shah monarch to a figurehead and making Prime Minister and other government positions hereditary. This changed in 1951 with the promulgation of a new constitution, and the re-opening of the borders of the country.

During the conflict, trends in forced migration experienced a sharp rise as approximately 1 million people from the rural areas fled their villages and permanently settled in safer urban centres (Williams and Pradhan 2008).

Effects on the urban spatial configuration

The resulting urban transformations are to be found in the changing patterns of the city's spatial configuration (**Figure 4.4**). The Kathmandu Valley is known for its large available agricultural space, which has gradually transformed into more urbanised areas at several points in time in the history of the Valley's settlement. The transition to a rapid urbanisation context has involved a shift in land uses, mainly in built-up areas as the agricultural space increasingly encroached over the peri-urban areas and forestlands delimiting the city and the valley since the 1980s (ILC 2011).

Figure 4.4 Changes in land uses in the Kathmandu Valley between 1967 and 2000



Source: Thapa (2008)

The intensification of agricultural activities was enabled by the development of infrastructures at the valley level and by the increased availability of opportunities on an expanding agricultural market. Beyond these phenomena, the Kathmandu Valley has been subjected to a diversification of activities and the fragmentation in land use, as unplanned and uncontrolled urban sprawl resulted in differentiated land development practices. As environmental issues have arisen as part of the urbanisation process, the metropolitan area nevertheless stands out as a steady rural-urban continuum in terms of agricultural and nonfarm activities being carried out in the Valley. The spatial reconfigurations entailed a recent trend in better planned residential development plans at the fringe of the city, setting the trend towards a more homogenous urban development which is sustained by the gradual expansion of the transportation network observed throughout the 1980s and 1990s within the Kathmandu Valley (World Bank 2013). Access to the city core areas has been facilitated by this joint development process, which made opportunities accessible to most commuters within the bowl-shaped valley and attracted further migration waves from the neighbouring rural areas (*"distance decay function"*; (Bruijn 1991: 222). The new urban frontiers can be observed on **Figure 4.4**, which depicts the gradual and fast-increasing changes in land uses between 1967 and 2000.

Changes in land uses are mostly driven by the settlement patterns of the new migrants, who decide to – as far as they are able to due to income and housing constraints – to settle close to economic opportunities and urban services. As a consequence, the reshaping in land uses resulted from higher land productivity in the core urban areas of the city, which witnessed a shift from agricultural activities to industry and service-related activities (Thapa 2008). The remaining agricultural production land therefore provides sustainable and steady revenue to the farmers who have owned agricultural land in the valley since the 1960s. These farmers benefit from the economic development of the Kathmandu Valley and improved access to urban markets where they are able to sell the most of their production. Since the 1990s, with new migrants arriving and settling in the core urban areas, opportunities in farming activities have been pushed towards the boundaries of the valley, and further constraints arose for agricultural production due to the intensification and saturation in agricultural land use. Flourishing of the carpet industry in the valley in the 1980s contributed to the city's increasingly attractive employment market, driven by the international demand for Nepalese carpet and the resulting private investments in this sector. By the 1990s, over 5000 carpet factories had been established in the valley and led to the current population growth pressure in the metropolitan area (World Bank 2013). The heterogeneous land use environment and the fall in carpet and ready-made garment demand in the 2000s led to a further reshaping of both the Kathmandu Valley's economic opportunities and employment functions the new migrants could engage in. Unplanned urban development and considerable changes in land uses therefore entailed a dramatic pressure over the city space, leading to a range of issues and threats related to water and power shortages, along with a rising population of squatters.

As a result, contested agricultural space has been coupled with further pressures on the available space for integrating the new migrants, among which limited access to affordable housing solutions and poor city planning schemes entailed a limited capacity for the city to absorb the constant influx of migrants from the rural areas. This escalating process has been

coupled with a lack of coherent planning strategies, which local urban bodies in Nepal have been unable to implement due to an inadequate distribution of resources allocated to urban planning. Institutional fragmentation at the country and metropolitan levels has caused a failure in mechanisms of coordination affecting the delivery of public services enhancement schemes for infrastructure and services. The effects of poor urban planning have been observed in the parallel development of unregulated labour and housing markets, which, under the growing urban population pressure, created differentiated socio-economic development patterns in the different areas of the city and fragmentation of the urban spatial and social fabric. Housing and settlement patterns are example of the effects of unregulated population growth and lack of urban planning leading to social segregation. Substandard and irregular settlements have been characterised by narrow alleys and the sprawling of buildings and houses on vacant spaces in the city, increasing the pressure on land use, lost spaces and housing prices. This also led to an increase in the vulnerability to environmental risks – particularly seismic risks (Ministry of Home Affairs 2002). The wider environmental issues affecting the changing spatial organisation of the Kathmandu Valley can be directly related to the trends in population growth, as lack of adequate sewage and waste management systems and the absence of a regulatory environment have led Kathmandu's rivers, namely the Bagmati River, to a state of open sewer for the nearby urban residents. As urbanisation took place in a much faster way than forecast, the Kathmandu Valley Long Term Development Plan arranged by the Kathmandu Valley Town Development Committee in 2002 has proven unable to tackle the demographic and resulting socio-economic changes in the Valley. Another factor which affected the implementation of the Kathmandu Valley's long term development plan relates to the overlap in institutional responsibilities for planning the future of the city region, as further municipal-level plans are still not aligned with the overall statutory plan for the Valley.

Overall, the changing spatial patterns of Kathmandu's rapid urbanisation have stemmed from a fast-growing urbanisation process, mainly driven by internal migration. Unregulated housing practices, poor urban planning strategies and heterogeneity in the socio-economic development of urban areas in the Kathmandu Valley have entailed a rise in urban vulnerabilities in a city with increasingly highly contested spaces (Thapa 2008). Consequences can be observed at the level of individual vulnerabilities, the poorest fringes of the urban population being subjected to the increasing effects of the unregulated housing and labour markets, inducing various consequences on the structures, the functions, the patterns and dynamics of individual livelihoods.

4.3 Urban vulnerabilities in Kathmandu City: Land use patterns, housing logics and the labour market

As illustrated previously, the socio-demographic and economic patterns affecting Kathmandu City have led to fast and uncontrolled changes in land uses and in the spatial organisation of the city. The shaping of urban vulnerabilities can be closely related to the increasing influx of unskilled migrants from the rural areas, who have been faced with a complex

urban fabric in which to integrate, both from the standpoint of livelihoods and availability of housing solutions. Social segregation can be observed at two levels, both affecting the decision-making processes of migrants as newcomers lacking information about employment opportunities and cheap housing alternatives: land patterns and housing logics, and pathways to a segregated urban labour market.

The making of vulnerability: The role of housing logics

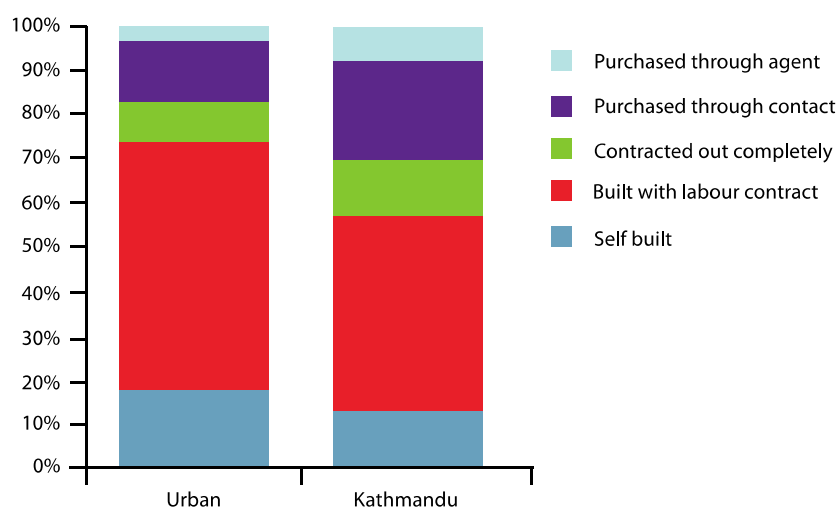
Land use patterns and housing logics in Kathmandu currently shaping urban vulnerabilities can be observed through three different angles. First, the residential density of the Valley reached 1000 inhabitants per hectare, thereby encroaching on farmland, urban interstices and open spaces (World Bank 2013). Built structures have sprawled in order to accommodate the increasing urban population and its housing needs, while land subdivisions have increased as a result of lack of space, leading to diminishing plot sizes. Secondly, substandard housing solutions have become common in most areas of the Kathmandu City, with an average of 5 people⁸⁷ sharing housing structures as small as 12 to 15 square meters (Toffin 2010). Beyond the issues associated with the use of poor materials failing to meet the basic requirements of health, hygiene, safety and seismic-related guidelines, a large number of Kathmandu's inhabitants are not able to afford formal housing and forced to build semi-permanent dwellings on squatted open land. Squatter settlements occupy marginal areas such as riverbanks and lowlands, often classified as sensitive flood areas. Occupation of heritage sites or open spaces surrounding temples and monasteries has been considered another alternative to formal housing, while open spaces such as dumps have witnessed a sprawling of such sub-standard settlements as well. Thirdly, the resulting loss of open space has led to increasing patterns of infill housing, hindering basic accessibility to both standard and sub-standard dwellings in Kathmandu City. The narrowing of streets and access roads is leading to an increased densification of the inner areas within the city space, causing patterns of socio-spatial segregation as formal residential complexes erect fences in order to limit the squatters' encroachment on open spaces. Horizontal expansion, as opposed to vertical expansion of built structures, has resulted in further spatial constraints and increasing pressure on land availability and housing prices, forcing the urban squatters to establish their settlement on riverbanks and low density waste land such as the Thapathali area (**Figures 4.5 and 4.6**).

Another interesting pattern in slum formation observed in Kathmandu City is more specifically linked to the increasing pressure on low-income segments of the urban housing market, as migrants from the rural areas tend to settle in rented rooms first, before acquiring informal knowledge about squatting areas through relatives or friends. As living conditions in rented rooms are comparable to living conditions in slum settlements, rural migrants choose to move to squatting areas where they can increase their consumption levels as they save on rent⁸⁸.

⁸⁷ This is an unusually low density for squatter settlements compared to other developing countries. According to Pradhan (2000), inadequate land development mechanisms are reflected by low density development, due to inaccessible vacant land, sprawl and haphazard growth increasing the cost of infrastructure and services.

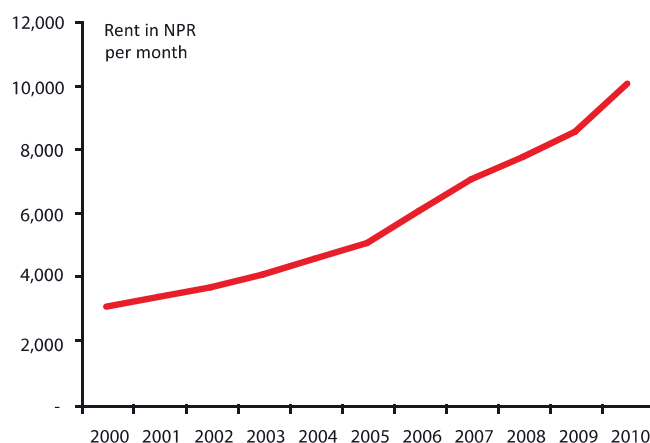
⁸⁸ These findings relate to the field work conducted as part of the research. Interestingly, no mention of this phenomenon could be found in the literature reviewed as part of this doctoral thesis. Refer to 4.4 for a detailed discussion.

Figure 4.5 Method of house acquisition in urban Nepal



Source: CIUD Household Survey (2010)

Figure 4.6 Rental prices in Kathmandu City



Source: CIUD Household Survey (2010)

Different types of sub-standard settlements have therefore been established over the last decades in Kathmandu City. According to the classification provided by the Nepalese UN-Habitat country office, slum settlements are characterised by low income and socially disadvantaged residents living in areas within substandard facilities, which however possess formal land titles (UN Habitat 2013). Squatter settlements, on the other hand, are defined by spontaneous settlements for which the residents do not have legal rights to occupy the urban space. The urban squatting population is referred to as 'sukumbasi', meaning that urban squatters do not have land ownership – although 'sukumbasi' in the wider context of Nepal also refers to individuals not owning land in other parts of the country. Two categories of 'sukumbasi' therefore cohabitate: the '*urban sukumbasi*', defined as urban squatters in Kathmandu but who may own land elsewhere in the rural areas of Nepal (also referred to as '*hukumbasi*' – "*someone who pretends to be a sukumbasi in order to obtain a land title, *lal purja*, as well as other advantages granted to the underprivileged*" (Yamamoto 2007: 141)), and the '*true sukumbasi*', characterised as having

no land possession either in Kathmandu or in other parts of the country. Thirdly, unplanned settlements are defined as settlements in which housing does not comply with the current housing and building regulations of the metropolitan area. As a result, the fast-paced urban population growth has mostly resulted in an increasing number of squatter settlements forming along the riverbanks and public open spaces in various parts of the city, both in central locations and at the margins of the Kathmandu's urbanised areas (**Figures 4.7 and 4.8**). Social segregation patterns reflect an uncommon spatial organisation, whereby the different income levels of the urban population have not been shaped the urban socio-economic configuration around distinctive neighbourhoods of wealthy and poor inhabitants, but resulted in the segregation of the low income categories to various urban interstices joining the standard formal residential structures with one another through the encroachment of open urban spaces.

Figure 4.7 Riverbank squatter settlements in Kathmandu metropolitan city



Photo4e: Poor squatters along Tinau Irrigation canal
© UN-HABITAT



Photo4f: Squatter settlement at Balkhu along Bagmati River
© UN-HABITAT

Source: Nepal Urban Housing Sector Profile, UN Habitat (2010)

Figure 4.8 Thapathali squatter settlement





Source: Author's photographs (2013)

Labour markets and effects of spatial segregation

Spatial segregation can be further observed through the patterns affecting the urban labour market, which has witnessed the establishment of diverse livelihood strategies influenced by the location, transport infrastructures and resources available as a function of the setting of the squatter settlements. The transport system is a key feature affecting access to urban opportunities for making a living, and both urban and suburban transport infrastructures in the Kathmandu Valley have failed to keep pace with urban growth and reconfiguration of the socio-spatial patterns of Kathmandu City. While constant congestion and severe under capacity of the transport system have affected the economic efficiency of the city's economic development, urban vulnerabilities observed at the level of the low income categories and new migrant groups have worsened due to limited access and long commute time between the different areas of the city. In-city journeys have also become expensive for the low-income groups, furthering the segregated access to the urban labour market. As transport planning remains poor, the strategic investment in building a peripheral road in order to ease the core urban congestion and poor inner-city road conditions has proven limited with respect to its expected impact. Further sub-standard settlements have been established along the Ring Road and increase the congestion patterns as a result of the increasing economic activities taking place in the peripheral areas. Access to employment opportunities has therefore remained limited for the economically disadvantaged groups which increasingly resort to livelihood activities available from walking or cycling distance of the sub-standard settlements. Vacant open spaces located in the city centre have consequently witnessed an increasing number of new migrants settling in centrally located squatter areas, leading to a further densification of the existing urban communities without land titles in these areas of Kathmandu.

Segregation also affects the urban labour market through the distinctive access given to the urban low-income category in terms of formal and informal activities. The informal economy in Nepal has been expanding dramatically compared to its formal counterpart. According to Suwal and Pant (2009), 96% of Nepal's economically active population is currently engaged in informal activities, which can range from paid workers, regular wage employed or self-employed farmers and labourers, to the more invisible category of unpaid family workers and household members engaged in domestic activities. While the agricultural sector still accounts for a significant share of the informal sector in Nepal, informal employment in non-agricultural activities reached 86% of

total national employment in 2008 (NLFS 2008). The features of the Nepalese informal economy can be observed in Kathmandu City through the following types of activities: trading (street vendors, hawkers); craft (traditional craftwork, ranging from wood, metal to smaller handicraft items); construction (builders, engineers, carpenters, painters, road builders); transport (drivers, ticket counters, transport helpers, loaders); domestic work; micro-enterprises such as family based shops (tea shops, meat shops, sewing shop); and home-based work (handicraft, sewing). In general, the informal economy considers all activities that are in law or in practice not covered by formal arrangements⁸⁹. Fragmented operational units and activities characterise the informal sector and payment is commonly made on a piece rate or daily rate basis (CBS 2008). Informal activities accessible by the low skilled categories of the Kathmandu population therefore use simple techniques or technologies, do not require qualifications, are characterised as being labour-intensive and often run as a family business implying a lack of social security and poor working conditions. The segregated aspect of the urban labour market is doubled with an additional segregating dimension of physical accessibility and use of local resources, as low income groups cannot afford using Kathmandu's transport system or commit to long commute times, and consequently tend to engage in activities relating to the processing of mostly local raw materials accessed in nearby areas. This pattern is particularly accurate when observing the living strategies of urban squatters, who resort to making a living out of street vending (tea, snacks, handicrafts, clothes) near their squatting communities or along road junctions. Home-based workers suffer from further vulnerabilities as they tend to lack visibility to the public eye of local authorities and are often forgotten as a group with particular needs and interests (Doane 2007). As self-employment and home-based work span across the different categories of (1) activity status, (2) occupation and (3) industry/services-related activities, the statistical count of these particular groups – although significant in volume – has been difficult to compile, with under estimations specifically affecting female workers in labour force surveys (Sudarshan and Sinha 2011). While further barriers stand along the way of socially- and culturally- acceptable work for women, it has often been flagged during such surveys that unpaid family work or economic activities taking place at home are (1) mostly carried out by women and (2) tend not to be perceived as work necessitating remuneration or being undertaken for the purpose of remuneration (Sudarshan and Jhabvala 2006). This has led to further difficulties in assessing the particular needs and interests of these workers although they amount to a significant share of the workforce in Kathmandu.

Informality therefore characterises the pool of economic activities rendered accessible to low-income groups, among which the share of new migrants and residents of squatting communities is significantly increasing. As the uncontrolled urbanisation and resulting changes in land uses and spatial organisation of the city were driven by an increasing influx of unskilled migrants from the rural areas, it consequently framed new forms of urban vulnerabilities within the

⁸⁹ This is the standard definition of the distinction between formal and informal activities, as given by Hussmanns (2005). While Chapter 4 presents the aspects of the Nepalese labour market through the lens of formal/ informal activities, it is argued in Chapter 5 (refer to 5.4) that the formal-informal dichotomy encompasses a plurality of meanings and that most criteria which have been used to discriminate between the two categories are found to be irrelevant in the context of the Nepalese economy. Work contracts involve both aspects of formality and informality, highlighting continuity between forms and contents of both formal and informal work situations. Refer to Chapter 5 for a detailed argumentation.

closely intertwined and segregated housing and labour markets. It is through these closely intertwined housing and labour markets that new comers and current squatters attempt to navigate using their limited information about affordable housing solutions and accessible livelihoods. Pathways within a segregated urban economy are therefore multiple, although the tendency has been towards the formation of imitative strategies whereby groups of new migrants attempt to conform and integrate to a complex urban social and economic fabric.

4.4 Social constructs of the 'dreamt' city: Internal migrants' mobility in Kathmandu city and the rural-urban nexus

Beyond the objective characteristics of the Kathmandu Valley and the related features of the city's spatial organisation, the understanding of urbanisation patterns and urban vulnerabilities takes a specific form in the context of squatting communities in Kathmandu, which can be explored through a more subjective assessment of how internal migrants first make the decision to move to the capital city and of the pathways they follow as they first encounter urban living conditions. The research focus chosen here is closely related to the idea that squatting settlements are the result of a historical, political and cultural context which cannot be left aside as an object of study. The dynamics affecting internal migration patterns demonstrate the need for extending the focus beyond the locally and time-bound observed living conditions and livelihood strategies of urban squatters.

Migration logics and the shaping of squatter settlements

Squatter settlements, including the case study presented here, are shaped by wider dynamics, which reflect the era of globalisation and the multi-local contexts in which urban squatters organise their livings. Consequently, focusing on migration patterns, reasons for migration, the different locations occupied by migrants in the city and the influence of rural-urban linkages appears as an appropriate strategy for disentangling the local, social and cultural power mechanisms that shape urban vulnerabilities and the decision-making context of urban squatters. The idea of a multi-level localism⁹⁰ or supra-local level (De Haan 2005) is explored in order to understand how migrants first make their decision to move to Kathmandu City and the pathways they follow as they first encounter urban living dynamics, in response to the agenda of understanding poor peoples' livelihoods beyond single cases of individual- and community- level studies.

Ways in which individual migration decisions are made can relate to various factors, ranging from rural households' strategies to send a migrant to economically active areas, push factors affecting farming activities' productivity such as landslide, to pull factors related to the search of higher qualifications and trainings or better employment opportunities⁹¹. How migrants first make the decision to move to the capital city however relates to a wider social and cultural

⁹⁰ Refer to the introduction and Chapter 1. De Haan's multi-level localism can be paralleled with methodological localism (the constitutive particle of the social world is the socially-embedded actor and his/her recurring interactions with other social actors and social groups).

⁹¹ Refer to 4.2 for a detailed discussion of pull and push factors affecting migration decisions.

setting in which migration from the rural to the urban areas is commonly accepted as a widely-used strategy to increase living standards. Migration is seen as a way of accessing alternative livings and a source of remittance to contribute to increase household income for both the migrant's household and rural populations receiving a share of the migrant's income. This trend is emerging as a determining aspect of the social and economic development of Nepal, as migration dynamics expand to foreign countries and international employment opportunities⁹². While Kathmandu remains the primary destination for rural migrants, it is also considered as a transitional space for getting access to formal paperwork and visas for those who aim at foreign labour markets.

Like many cities in developing countries, Kathmandu City is therefore approached through differentiated entry points by migrant populations, as the cultural settings in which the migration decision takes place increasingly relate to the *subjective* assessment of available employment and housing opportunities. Migrants' decisions can be further explained through their relationship and exposure to the neoliberal rebranding of the city as a '*promised land*'⁹³, which role expands beyond the basic aspirations of better life opportunities and takes the shape of a more global aspiration to interact with a commoditised economy in which goods and services are represented as desirable items embedding their consumers in the globalised era of cash economics and consumption. Migration to aspiring 'global cities' result into rural migrants embedding supra-level factors in their decision-making process linked to the wider social and cultural statuses and opportunities the 'dreamt' city can offer them. The dream of bright-light city life is strengthened in the rural areas where access to radio or television programs give a direct exposure to bright images of what the capital city has to offer, in addition of dreams of securing better living standards and higher education degrees. First-time and life-long migrants tend to experience the 'dreamt' city phenomenon as migration distances make the migration decision a lifetime decision and in most cases a first-time departure from the rural and traditional living conditions. This phenomenon of the 'dreamt' city is emphasised through the visits of former migrants to the rural areas who tend to exhibit material possessions they acquired in Kathmandu City as a result of their increased income, most of which can be simply based on exhibiting city clothing or basic commodities usually not available in rural economies. Furthermore, the migrant's search for a key to the dreamworld's door encompasses irrational aspirations and representations of the city life, as rural populations tend to be aware of the well-established unaffordable Kathmandu's education system and lock down of university training courses, in a capital city where the price of goods are increasing along with housing difficulties and employment insecurity. Cities as the only place for dreams (Grunawalt 2012) is a recurrent aspect of youth migration decisions in developing countries, as dominant media discourses shape mistaken views and form the irrational imaginaries of migrant populations.

⁹² Refer to 4.1 for a discussion of the remittance-induced Dutch disease effects in Nepal.

⁹³ This term has been used by respondents during the household survey and was also dominant in key informants' discourses. As such, it does not relate to the existing literature around Kathmandu City and its migrants, but is presented here as a point of interest as part of the presentation of the case study.

Mobility in Kathmandu City

Although media portrayals of issues relating to urban poverty, poor government services and evictions in sub-standard settlements tend to counterbalance the 'dreamt' city phenomenon, the pathways followed by internal migrants in their 'dreamt' city are often to be linked with the rural-urban continuum's influence on migration decisions. On the one hand, migrants appear to be directed towards specific forms of urban survival or coping strategies before reaching their migration destination, mostly based on previous rural migrants' experiences and tales of success told in the villages. As found during the research, the first encounter with urban living in Kathmandu is therefore influenced by group dynamics and social constraints associated with the migration networks available to the new migrant, taking the form of housing decisions (knowledge about renting a cheap and affordable room versus settling in sub-standard settlements through family contacts or acquaintances) or employment decisions (joining a family run business such as tea shop or meat shop versus engaging in unskilled construction work through friends or family contacts). The rural-urban network tends to considerably affect the initial level of endowments and capabilities of migrants as they first move to the capital city, shaping the further inner-city migration patterns as migrants accumulate local knowledge about the workings of housing and labour markets. Migrants therefore move from rented rooms to squatting areas (urban-urban migration) as they realise they could save on household expenditures by opting for sub-standard housing strategies and as they find their ways through entering these sub-standard urban spaces without attracting the attention of local residents and government authorities. Migrants' navigations in the city tend to follow multiple and unique patterns – not always using sub-standard settlements as the 'way in' into the city urban fabric, rather the opposite as rural migrants find their 'allocated space' within this fabric after a first period living in rented rooms. These 'navigations' in the city are most commonly influenced by the primary knowledge and social networks at the disposition of the new comers, and further local knowledge accumulated through first employment environments and neighbouring in rented rooms.

Rural-urban linkages

Based on fieldwork observations, the rural-urban nexus appears to be made of strong links. These links range from remittances and the sustenance of life in rural areas, to ensuring the existence of a safety net (option of return to the rural areas) in case of adverse life events affecting migrant workers. These patterns imply that the migrant worker cannot be solely understood within the frame of individual decision-making when it comes to migration decisions. The migrant worker rather embeds his/her decision within the wider context of (1) the household, often left behind in the rural areas, (2) the extended family, sometimes already living in Kathmandu City and providing the migrant a means of making a living and housing solutions, and (3) the extended village community level through which migration decisions and aspirations for better living conditions are being shaped. Initiatives related to migration are therefore taken within the wider family and kin structures, reflecting the importance of a rural-urban continuum in ensuring the existence of a safety net in both the migration destination and back in the rural areas. As a result, the changing agency of migrant populations is explored as part of the existing social structures imposing restrictions on migration logics, which demonstrates the influence of multi-local contexts on ways in which squatters organise their livings.

4.5 Landownership debate and the social meanings of squatting in Kathmandu City

The sub-standard housing – urban poverty nexus has faced various developments in the recent decades, as cities in developing countries such as Nepal are coping with rapid urbanisation patterns and limited resources regarding the institutional framework in which they implement urban planning strategies. In the case of Nepal, responding to housing needs is a recent challenge as the shortage in low income housing has been pressured by fast paced urbanisation in the Kathmandu Valley over the past decades. The various forms of sub-standard housing and their influence over the Nepalese land ownership debate bring the study of the social construction of sub-standard housing and land ownership meanings as a central focus, necessary for an in-depth understanding of the context in which the decision-making processes of slum dwellers are being studied. The resulting observation of the existence of local representations of squatter communities demonstrate the extent to which livelihood strategies can be related to a shared identity influencing the perceptions around available opportunities and the type of making a living accessible by the squatting population.

Meanings of ownership

The study of the social construction of *ownership* meanings benefits from a sociological approach as the legitimacy of land occupation is not systematically coupled with the existence of formal property rights, but encompasses wider contextual meanings given to what one owns or does not. The debate therefore lies in the identification of who, among a broad range of social actors and their respective social representations, defines the *legitimacy* of occupancy – that is, who draws the line between formality and informality, *de facto* and *de jure* rights. Defined as a grey area or a continuum, tenure security tends to be increasingly linked to occupiers' views of their right to informal city spaces. As underlined by Sindzingre (2006b: 3), there is a clear *"difficulty in establishing criteria of formal and informal institutions and contracts. Criteria such as the credibility of rules and enforcement capacity have greater explanatory power. Together with the distinction between the forms and contents of institutions, these features more accurately explain the structure and transformation of activities and institutions, which are described through the formal-informal duality"*. Focusing on land ownership perceptions and the processes through which they are socially constructed by actors with conflicting views offer an alternative approach to the formal and informal occupation of city spaces, and goes beyond the substitutability of the formal/informal housing debates.

In most of the economic literature relating to land ownership, the focus has been on rural areas and agricultural income; while sub-standard housing tends to have a separate body of literature dealing mostly with urban dynamics, leaving aside the rural-urban nexus. Establishing a link between rural land ownership and the production of sub-standard housing in cities can be achieved through a sociological approach, using social actors' perceptions of both rural and urban meanings attached to occupancy. To a large extent, land ownership in rural areas has been seen as a productive asset, a safety net (*"safety net or insurance function which is made more valuable through retaining ownership rights than through sale"* (De Janvry et al. 2001: 43)),

guaranteeing agricultural income and a wide range of risk-coping strategies, and acting as a major determinant of temporary migration decisions (Vanwey 2003). In the context of developing cities, rapid urbanisation patterns have been increasingly linked to low agricultural returns or unequal land distribution in rural areas, resulting in migration waves to urban areas where housing markets (affected by the rising cost of urban land over the past decades (Jones and Ward 1994)) could not respond to the increasing low income housing needs of the migrant populations. As a result, these populations pushed towards an increase in the number of illegal settlements in available city spaces.

Observing this phenomenon from a sociological angle, the *right* to informal city spaces has no established meaning and does not respond to any written rule or law system; perceptions about informal spaces and informal housing are built through local actors' representation of illegality, and the extent to which illegality and informality are considered *legitimate* is intrinsically linked to how migrant populations are perceived as having no other choice than occupying land illegally. The *legitimacy of illegality* therefore draws upon various social views – those of political leaders, local authorities, urban middle-class and elites, media, etc. Consequently, the processes attached to arbitrating *who* is entitled to informal city spaces has become increasingly linked to perceptions of rural life, agriculture, rural livelihoods and to a wider extent, to land ownership in rural areas. In societies such as Nepal where unequal land distribution has been a central issue, being a landowner in rural areas has had a considerable impact on social representations regarding urban informal land occupancy by rural migrants.

The resulting identity of slum squatters in Kathmandu City is therefore articulated around the building of a shared space, occupied and illegally 'possessed' by its residents who consider the occupation of the city space as not being governed by organised rules but on the contrary subjected to informal agreements and expectations that the government and local authorities will eventually authorise the legal occupation of urban spaces based on previous examples. In the case of the Thapathali settlement, squatter-state relationships appear to have a strong influence over the building of a squatter's identity, whereby the squatting areas develop a social function claimed by its residents as crucial and necessary for the integration of rural migrants to the urban social fabric. The extent to which such settlements can be defined as cohesive is subjected to various patterns, all specific to the characteristics of the squatting population illegally occupying the city's open spaces. Depending on the settlement history, characteristics of the first settlers, evolution of the settlement, arrival of new migrant groups, internal spatial organisation of the settlement area, types of housing strategies in place, socio-economic features of the squatting households, and different livelihood strategies put in place by these households, the degree of cohesiveness is respectively affected based on daily interactions, the representations of commonly lived events, the meanings associated with living-together and the building of a micro-level society with its own and independent structures.

Squatting in Kathmandu City

It emerges from field observation that the building of a shared space⁹⁴ is related to the 'double-door entry' function of squatting areas, which are often seen as a transitional space from rural livings to more established forms of urban settlements. Although transitional in various aspects, squatting settlements are existing entities which tend to outlast one or two generations of migrants, therefore producing a lived space over the timeframe of several decades. Kathmandu's squatting areas have been subjected to a rapid urbanisation context which has left the squatting population with no other choice than staying permanently and organising long-term living strategies, embedded in newly formed and constantly evolving dynamics of the wider city logics. The degree of cohesion within the squatting settlements is therefore prolonged and strengthened as squatters settle in their current living conditions and strategies for making a living. The transitional aspects of the squatting space also result in having new comers settling in these areas as part of their first encounter with urban living conditions and a commoditised economy, which furthers the cohesive dynamics through the establishment of solidarity patterns following the rural norms commonly shaping the cohesiveness of rural villages. As such, squatting communities fulfil the role of integrating new migrants to the wider urban logics, by giving them exposure to information as diverse as opportunities on the informal urban labour market, ways of managing household expenditures in a cash economy or knowledge about the skills and qualifications needed to access more formal employment opportunities. As a mechanism of social defence, the sub-standard settlement acts as a safety net in which new migrants are exposed to former migrants' living strategies and the coping methods they have put in place to integrate in the urban social and economic fabric.

The slum function in the city space and observed social bounding over the creation of self-help groups and informal safety nets can therefore evidence the building of a shared identity among squatters. As squatter settlements are characterised by maximum utilisation of the available space for semi-permanent dwellings, a primary concern is over the management of space, which has to take place at the level of community rules and agreements over the influx of new comers encroaching over the existing settlement. As these patterns can be observed in most of Kathmandu's sub-standard settlements, the social meanings of squatting cannot be further explored at a general level, and are investigated within the specific set of features of the Thapathali slum settlement in the following section.

4.6 The Thapathali slum settlement: A historical overview

Of the 75 settlements identified in the city region (Hada 2001), 65 of them are located in Kathmandu Metropolitan City along the riverbanks of the Vishnumati River, which crosses the city from north to south, and of the Bagmati River which flows south of Kathmandu. As the number of such squatter settlements increased since the 1980s (2134 inhabitants in 1985, reaching 15000 in 2005 (Thapa 2008)), a couple of settlements can be traced back to the beginning of the 1950s,

⁹⁴ These findings are presented and discussed in Chapter 5. This section aims to provide a background to these findings by building upon the context-specific information on land ownership and the slum function in Kathmandu.

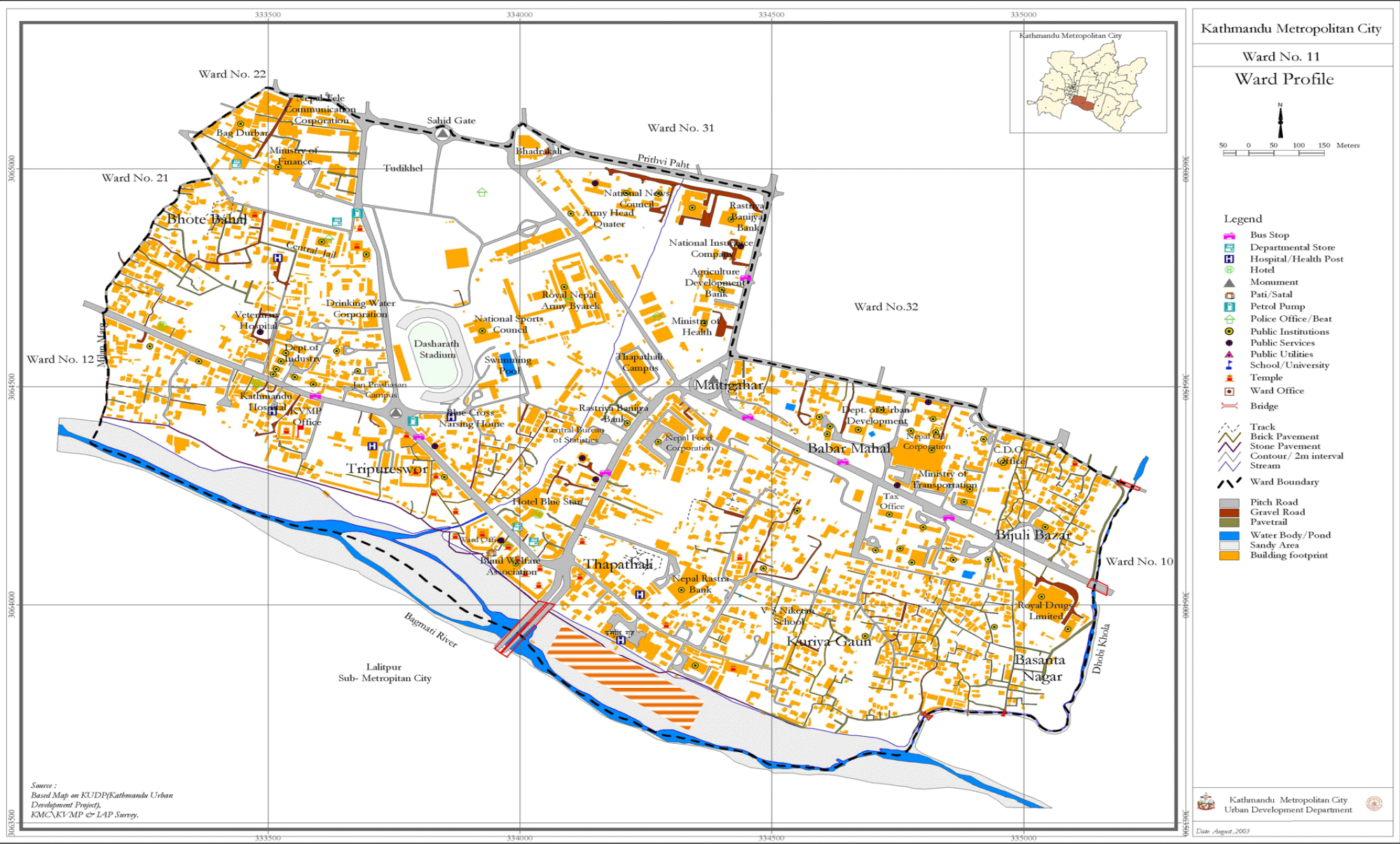
although a large majority of them formed in the last two decades, and the historical and political contexts are powerful explanatory factors of slum formation: *"slum formation mostly happens when the government is weak or when governance is unclear. People take advantage of these positions. Following the 2005-06 political crisis, settlements in squatting areas appeared during election times. It happens in no time, a group of people come and build shelters all of a sudden. It is not one house after the other"* (key informant, January 2013, UN-Habitat Nepal). The case of the Thapathali squatting area illustrates this type of slum formation process. Following a political demonstration in 2006, small shacks were built in a couple of days on government-owned land along the Bagmati River (**Figure 4.9**).

Nevertheless, the case of Thapathali slum settlement differs from the majority of Kathmandu's squatter settlements in other aspects. Situated along the riverbank, the 400-metre area encroached illegally from the Bagmati bridge in Thapathali to Buddhanagar occupies a strategic and central location, close to economic opportunities. As opposed to other squatter settlements in Kathmandu, the Thapathali area is visible to most of the urban population as the Bagmati bridge offers a clear view of the small huts. Another specific feature of the area is linked to its status as floodable land, the latest major flood dating to 1993. As a result of the dumping of solid waste along the river, the Bagmati riverbanks development process has undergone the physical emergence of unregistered lands not figuring on the cadastral maps established in the 1960s. Although it remains classified as a river flood plain by local authorities, the area has been less subjected to flooding due to sand mining activities that deepened the riverbed and revealed and expanded the riverbank lands. Such widened embankments in the city's central areas have therefore been considered as new potential places for the homeless and low income population groups, comprehended as left-over floodable open spaces where the government had neither the intention nor the capacity to establish public infrastructures and residential complexes.

A closed community

The settlers arrived on the land only 7 years ago, which makes the Thapathali slum community a newly-established and relatively homogenous community as its internal population remained steady since the first arrival of squatters. The role of the national and local political contexts has been significant in the establishment of the squatting community, as a small group of individuals marched over the riverbanks following a political demonstration in Kathmandu's city centre. Settlers rapidly joined the movement by securing small plots in the Thapathali area, and most of the new squatters belonged to a migration wave which took place in 2004-05, following the difficulties engendered by the armed conflict in their villages and the aftermath of the landslides in 2001 (leaving a large number of rural farmers with no farming lands and agricultural revenue). Between 2006 and 2013, almost no new comers settled in the area as the local residents kept the boundaries of the river flood land closed to other low income households, who were also further kept away by the threat of eviction formulated by government authorities on several occasions during this period. The few new comers after 2006 had acquaintances in the Thapathali area and settled on shared plots, strengthening the perception of *informal ownership* over the occupied land.

Figure 4.9 Location of Thapathali within Kathmandu's urban fabric



Thapathali settlement area

Source: Adapted from Kathmandu Metropolitan City (2006)

As spontaneous settlements operate in the absence of formal rules and emerge as a common phenomenon in various developing countries, the case of the Thapathali slum settlement is illustrated by an uncommon narrative taking place in the space of a couple of weeks and subsequently preventing the settlement of other squatters. While reinforcing the effect of the physical boundaries of the settlement as an already bounded plot of floodable land between the fringes of the city centre and the Bagmati River, the enclosed community has used the spontaneous settlement narrative as a leit motiv in the shaping of a 7-year long shared squatting identity. Through various actors' discourses, the spontaneous colony acknowledges its expectations relating to the legal regularisation of their shared space by the government, perceived as an actor who pushed the squatters to the last resort solution of occupying the Bagmati riverbank. Marching over the free and promised land is closely related to a political act in the views of slum dwellers, whose narrative was strengthened by the media portrayals of the occupation of the Thapathali area. Originally thought of as a temporary settling strategy, the political act failed to reach its objectives and to claim affordable housing solutions from the government authorities.

***Sukumbasi and hukumbasi*⁹⁵**

Based on field observations and discussions with key informants, it appears that another aspect of the specific shared identity of Thapathali squatters relates to the external representations associated with the 'marching over Thapathali' narrative, which has been interpreted by other and older squatting settlements as "*an operation launched by fake sukumbasi*" (Toffin 2010: 161). Leaders of squatting self-help groups and political movements within these older settlements openly claim that the Thapathali area has been taken over by hukumbasi (possessing land titles in their home villages). The Thapathali narrative has therefore been altered by the perception that some of the settlers are currently occupying plots of land where they sublet their shelters to other sukumbasi, creating internal conflicts among the Thapathali squatters themselves and affecting the squatting identity and cohesion of the settlement. The apparent wealth signs of the Thapathali settlement (building of brick houses and permanent structures such as a community school) resulted in eviction fears contaminating other riverside communities as the government's plans to clear off sub-standard settlements links strongly to the local authorities' fear of illegal economic activities taking place in these areas along with emerging features of permanent dwellings strengthening the apparent legitimacy of illegal land occupation. By setting a precedent, the forced eviction of the Thapathali slum settlement eventually fed into the externally-shaped narrative of the spontaneous colony, while exacerbating the eviction fear of other communities and singling out Thapathali as a catalyst factor in triggering the government's forceful reclamation of its occupancy rights.

The eviction event

The history of the Thapathali slum settlement can be read through different historical and political events, and while the spontaneous march on the Bagmati riverbank appears as the founding premises for the establishment of the colony, the 7 year old settlement presents

⁹⁵ Refer to 4.3 for a detailed discussion of the terms sukumbasi and hukumbasi.

uncommon processes regarding the positions of the government and local authorities towards its legitimacy. As a result of a three-year long process, the Nepalese government announced in 2011 its intention to evict the Thapathali community for development purposes, with Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bijay Kumar Gachhadar insisting on removing the landless squatters at any expense. The Minister for Land Reforms and Management, Bhim Prasad Gautam, announced late 2011 that a consensus with the United National Landless Squatters Front had been reached to form a High-Level Landless Squatters Problems Resolution Commission to explore solutions and alternatives for the landless squatters. After a ten-day long process, the commission did not reach an agreement and it was decided in December 2011 to resort to force to conduct the eviction.

The forced eviction itself took place on May 8th 2012, as local authorities deployed 2,000 police personnel from the Nepal Armed Police Forces with bulldozers. A couple of months prior to the eviction, the government had informed the resident families that it was prepared to provide lump sum housing allowances to cover a three-month rent period. As this compensation was sought by less than one fifth of the families living in Thapathali, Prime Minister Bhattarai held the squatters responsible for the eviction by stating that they had chosen to listen to the NGOs and INGOs, instead of accepting the financial compensation offered by the government. Following the eviction, the government further announced that a relocation programme in the south of the city would be arranged for the evictees, although host communities had already been demonstrating against the relocation plan.

4.7 Local actors' representations of Thapathali: Consequences for micro-level social structures affecting the decision environment

Through an exploration of the diverse social representations of the Thapathali squatter settlement and its recent eviction (May 2012) – as constructed by NGOs, local government, political parties, Kathmandu's growing middle class population and slum dwellers themselves – this section aims to think beyond descriptive approaches and explores the sociological understanding of a specific situation in which urban planning failed to meet its objectives. The multiplicity of actors and the resulting diversity of standpoints related to squatter settlements in the case of the Thapathali slum area in Kathmandu city centre offer a comprehensive example of the limitations to informal neighbourhoods' regularisation and incorporation in a fast growing city.

The land tenure debate

The shift from the traditional land tenure debate encompasses new entry points, such as (1) how such squatter settlements form and the linkages with the historical, political and local context, illustrated by the case of Thapathali's recent status as a squatting area, following a political demonstration in 2006 during which small shacks were built in a couple of days on government owned land, (2) the land tenure discourse in the case of Nepal, and the social stigma associated with the landless ('sukumbasi') in the context of the changing agrarian economy and rapid urbanisation patterns resulting in a contested city space, (3) the polarisation of the land ownership debate between 'fake' landless urban slum dwellers ('hukumbasi') still owning land in the villages and who came to Kathmandu for better livelihood opportunities, and

the actual landless population, (4) the rationale of Nepal's government and local administration for eviction of visible slum areas, and social representations following the failed eviction, (5) the sociology of uncertain living conditions following the eviction process (households' incapacity to invest their labour and savings in improving their dwellings) and the dynamics of incremental processes (land ownership certificate discussions, relocation programmes, etc.) in a context of political instability and troubled negotiations between the government and slum dwellers, (6) the status of squatted land and failure of urban planning strategies to address housing needs in city spaces where land tenure cannot be established, illustrated by the case of Thapathali as a publicly owned river flood plain along the Bagmati river due to remain unoccupied.

Photograph 4.10 Before and after the eviction process



Source: Tesinsky (2011) (left) and author's photograph (2013) (right)

In a context of rapid urbanisation and sprawling sub-standard settlements, governments and local authorities in developing cities have been faced with increasing pressure on urban infrastructures resulting in highly contested city spaces. The lack of institutional capacity to either upgrade existing settlements or relocate squatting populations has given rise to various urban planning strategies aiming at coping with migrant populations settling in non-residential areas. Eviction has mainly been carried out in inner city areas, where the cost of land and high demand for formal housing from wealthier households has created an atmosphere of tenure insecurity for households established in sub-standard settlements, while other strategies to discourage consolidation, such as the non-provision of basic services and infrastructures, have been common alternatives to eviction (Ahmed 2007).

Social representations of tenure

The social meanings attached to eviction and their impact on representations linked to the legitimacy of sub-standard settlements are increasingly shaped by the fact that forced eviction is being perceived as a last resort option by the international community, regarded as a traumatic experience entailing urban social fragmentation. For these reasons, land regularisation and incremental housing approaches are slowly becoming the preferred option when dealing with sub-standard settlements, although in some contexts, forced evictions with no alternative options offered to the evicted are still employed. An interesting entry point to the understanding of eviction and the extent to which it affects the perception of tenure security and the legitimacy of squatter settlements can be found in an analysis of housing as produced by individuals as a concrete manifestation of their intentions, aspirations and motivations to make an informal space

their own. Symbolic attachment to land and places in the context of rural-urban migration can be understood as meanings and values assigned to sub-standard housing *within* a specific social context. The meaning of squatting for households grows out of the ways in which local actors act towards them and their identity as *squatters*. Meanings are therefore social products formed through social representations of informality and the social interactions of slum dwellers with the rest of the urban population – which are to shape the mechanisms leading to successful incremental housing approaches, or, in the case study presented here, to unclear urban planning policies resulting in eviction processes.

Incremental housing policies draw upon a wide range of options, either by upgrading and regularising sub-standard settlements where they were first established (referred to as 'in-situ upgrading') or by relocating settlers to places where they are offered tenure security and access to basic infrastructure (known as 'relocation'), with the common aim of providing an improved access to housing. Various benefits and limitations have been found regarding both approaches, notably the benefits of maintaining the community structure versus difficulties in providing basic services in encroached inner city spaces ('in-situ upgrading'); distance from the city and its employment opportunities, difficulties linked to living on the edge of the city economy (Choguill 1993) and disrupted social and economic network ('relocation'). Land ownership meanings take a significant importance in conceptualising incremental housing approaches, as the understanding of households' motivations behind the production of housing is essential for the success of such urban planning policies. Values, norms and procedures regarding tenure are constantly renegotiated through informal land regularisation processes, and a key assumption in this debate relates to ownership as a motivator for housing consolidation and the extent to which choice of ownership as the preferred tenure option by slum dwellers is having an impact on urban planning strategies. Advocating for regularisation entails a shift in perceptions towards considering informal tenure as a social change approach, as making legitimacy into legality involve the idea that the sub-standard housing sub-system can complement the formal system, with governments and local actors shifting from hostility towards the production of sub-standard housing to acknowledging sub-standard house producers as "*real builders and designers of large parts of cities*" (Cheema 1993: 34). To a large extent, regularisation policies have been conceptualised based on Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto's idea that urban informality had to be faced through legalisation processes, arguing that economic benefits could be achieved by linking the informal economy to the formal economic system:

Most of the poor already possess the assets they need to make a success of capitalism. But they hold these resources in defective forms. They lack the process to represent their property and create capital. They have houses, but not titles.

(Mammen 2001: 3)

Legal property thus gave the West the tools to produce surplus value over and above its physical assets. Property representations enabled people to think about assets not only through physical acquaintance but also through the description of their latent economic and social qualities. Whether anyone intended it or not, the legal property system became the staircase that took these nations from the universe of assets in

their natural state to the conceptual universe of capital where assets can be viewed in their full productive potential.

(De Soto 2001: 51)

Exploring local actors' representations

Using *ownership* as an entry point allows regularisation programs to take account of historical, cultural and local contexts while incorporating various social actors' perceptions of what is meant by forms of tenure arrangements, both legal and customary. As explained by McPherson (2004: 309), "*ownership describes and prescribes a certain set of social relations surrounding the object that is supposedly 'owned'. Ownership constitutes a relationship between the owner and other agents and demarcates relational rights instead of absolute ones*". Legality and legitimacy in respect of the plurality of laws regulating the housing market and its land tenure aspects is therefore informed by social meanings and perceptions assigned to the production of informal housing. A large number of studies has considered the role of perceptions of housing forms in the expression of slum dwellers' identity (Duncan 1989; Holston 1991; Hummon 1989; Pratt 1981), demonstrating the need to anchor housing policies and incremental housing approaches to the social context local authorities are dealing with, which is a crucial angle to approach the Thapathali case study.

A collection of semi-structured interviews is therefore presented and analysed in this section as evidence of a coherent set of meanings about a specific topic area, providing insights around the different socially constructed meanings local actors attach to sub-standard housing and land ownership in Kathmandu urban areas (**Tables 4.11** and **4.12**). It is important to note that the social representations held by slum dwellers themselves are presented in the next chapter (**Chapter 5**), and that this section focuses on the representations of external actors⁹⁶. Unravelling the meanings associated with the eviction event is deemed necessary at the stage of presenting the Thapathali case study, as the particularity of the situation calls for an in-depth understanding of the context in which slum dwellers make their livings. As explained in **Chapter 3**, the case study is however not being labelled as a post-eviction situation for the purpose of this research, due to the specific objectives of the research which links to decision-making processes and the extent to which these are anchored in longer periods of time compared to events which occurred a year ago. While salient aspects of the eviction events and following political situation entailed a significant influence on decision-making processes relating to making a living, these are being considered as contextual factors and are not studied for themselves, but presented as part of the case study's description. As mentioned in the methodology section⁹⁷, evidence presented in the following section reflects information collected using semi-structured interviews with 46 local actors (local NGOs, INGOs, academics, journalists), transcribed in a written collection of texts. A typology of actors involved is presented in the methodology section. Approaching local actors' perceptions using Discourse Analysis enables an in-depth understanding of the epistemological

⁹⁶ Refer to Chapter 3 for a description of external actors and the presentation of the interview guide used during the research.

⁹⁷ Refer to Chapter 3.

and ontological assumptions behind a set of statements through the use of a system of classification, the point of which is to highlight the underlying meanings and motivations of actors.

The multiplicity of actors and the resulting diversity of standpoints related to squatter settlements can be identified as a mechanism leading to the failure of sub-standard neighbourhoods' incorporation into a fast-growing city. **Tables 4.11** and **4.12** highlight evidence of differentiated understandings of sub-standard housing, land and ownership which outlines the multiplicity of actors and their shape of thoughts regarding squatter settlements as a spatial component of a fast growing city. Academic sources tend to define slum areas as a sum of individuals gathered in one place, following a migration decision either linked to political issues or economic opportunities. The idea of marginalisation as a defining criterion for slum populations is strong, as the emphasis in academic discourse is highly dependent on enumerating the determinants and factors which contributed to the establishment of the slum. The slum therefore emerges as a patchwork of individuals, from diverse origins, geographically or ethnically, with differentiated views and a lack of proper political power due to the variety of geographical origins, castes or ethnicities. *"There is no community spirit per se in slum areas, as some people are politically displaced, more connected to the city, and the other are just the marginalised, with no purchasing power and less access to state facilities"; "in terms of economic resources, they have a similar economic status. What is different is culture, ethnicity, religion; beyond this, the living status is the same among groups"* (Academics, Interviews, 2013). Local NGOs point out the difficulty to find economic opportunities, and offer a view of slum dwellers as migrants with no other choices. *"Those who are landless, if they migrate from rural to urban areas, they usually try to find somewhere where they can stay for a long time, because they know they cannot go back"* (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013). Slum settlements are about *"finding a place"*, fitting in a social fabric which is not prepared to include migrant populations. *"In some cases, new comers rent very small rooms in Kathmandu. This is one type of settlement. Otherwise they go to slum areas. But it is difficult for the newcomers; when you come from a village, you have difficulties finding a place to occupy in slum areas"* (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013). The urban social fabric has a network of its own, which is difficult to enter: *"in slum areas, poverty is not linked to religion or ethnicity. It depends on linkages with outside, with other parts of the city, with rural areas, with the family"* (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013).

Table 4.11 Image schemas and references by type of actor⁹⁸

Type of actor	Analogies, stories, salient examples	Sentiment words and adjectives	Quotations, sourcing, references, concepts
Academics	Descriptors of informality and housing involve 'dual policy', 'protests', 'displaced', 'land status', 'legal', 'processes' – revealing academic preference for interpretive focus and categorization of facts.	Low occurrence of sentiment words. Academics use 'distance' as a position towards events.	Conceptualised signifiers such as 'employment', 'displaced', 'migration dynamics', 'conflict', 'poverty' showing the extent to which Academics have a pre-structured and ideologico-political interpretation of reality.
Local NGOs	Local NGOs' discourse privileges collaborative ways of engaging with subjects, with frequent reference to pronouns. The NGOs standpoint is overly expressed as an 'active' vs. descriptive approach to the situation, with the enunciation of strong views about 'facts', 'what happened' and 'what's next' on the agenda for evicted populations.	Discursive tensions in participant role description, as NGOs discourse is tainted with inherent contradictions and an intense focus on the micro-level society represented at the level of the slum.	The understanding of deeper dynamics and concepts is left to the academic interpretive speech. NGOs' interpretive speech relates to their expertise as human rights NGO, caste discrimination approach, or basic services delivery NGO type.
International NGOs / International organisations	International NGOs portray themselves through discourse as filling a governance gap, with an emphasis on 'modes of engagement' as an approach to slum settlements and related situations. The 'bargaining model' is expressed as a step forward to the implementation of policies that would satisfy all actors.	Tend to be neutral and descriptive with a policy-making focus.	Global-view interventions and recurrent references to similar international contexts.
Journalists	Strong power aspects of Journalists speech in the field of discursivity.	Journalists' discourse tend to privilege adverse subject positions, under the vocabulary set of 'threat', 'power', 'social function' of agents and their relation to 'politics'.	Salient concepts involve 'struggle', 'power' and 'political sphere' – all encompass dimensions of journalistic style, with the aim of striking the audience.

Source: Key informants' interviews (2013)

⁹⁸ The detailed list of actors can be found in Chapter 3.

Table 4.12 Metaphorical mapping by type of actor

Type of actor	Markers and intensifiers (metaphorically speaking, literally, actually, almost, in fact, regular)	Causal similes (as if, though, like, as), perceptual, cognitive and other processes (seemed, sounded, looked)
Academics	<i>Medium occurrence</i> – which shows the multifunctional aspects of discourse markers, less used for their communicative function in academic speech (informs, warns, suggest, disagrees); but mostly used to create the conditions of a linear explanation for facts.	<i>High occurrence</i> – meaning-making among academics shows preference for the logical connectives of addition and consequence, preference for ideas that escalate to a level where all arguments previously listed add up to a tangible explanation.
Local NGOs	<i>Medium occurrence</i> – relates to how local NGOs use markers as a way to emphasise logical connections between two ideas which do not easily connect or articulate. NGOs often try to link their discourse with the wider context (urbanisation, world economy) using markers and intensifiers.	<i>Medium occurrence</i> – causal similes are supporting the signifier set of 'engagement', with markers functioning as signifiers of NGOs' will. NGOs tend to use and identify (as if, like) with salient images and a social justice discourse to describe and engage with a situation.
International NGOs / International organisations	<i>Medium occurrence</i> – wider discourse on international contexts. Use of markers and intensifiers shows ability to directly and indirectly participate in policy making.	<i>Medium occurrence</i> – highlights the normative function of International Organisations in using cognitive processes to describe an eviction event.
Journalists	<i>Low occurrence</i>	<i>Medium occurrence</i> – field of persuasion.

Source: Key informants' interviews (2013)

Using visual representations of the words and content of actors' discourse, patterns presented in the tables above are highlighted in the diagrams below (**Figures 4.13 to 4.16**). It stands out that academic sources use a political angle to describe squatter settlements and their rationale (government, displaced, political, conflict, Maoist); as opposed to local NGOs' discourse which is highly centred around social and economic aspects of what constitutes a slum area (work, opportunities, getting a job, caste, Dalit, poverty). International organisations seem to assign more importance to what makes the slum area a functional place, or the extent to which squatter settlements can be improved through targeted policies (training, services, employment, solution, rented room). Journalists' discourse, on the other hand, is logically centred on the slum settlement as an entity existing through events and how these are perceived by urban dwellers and politics as a whole (happened, eviction, government, political, parties, struggle, power, different), granting the slum area an existence through external representations.

Figure 4.13 Academics' discourse⁹⁹

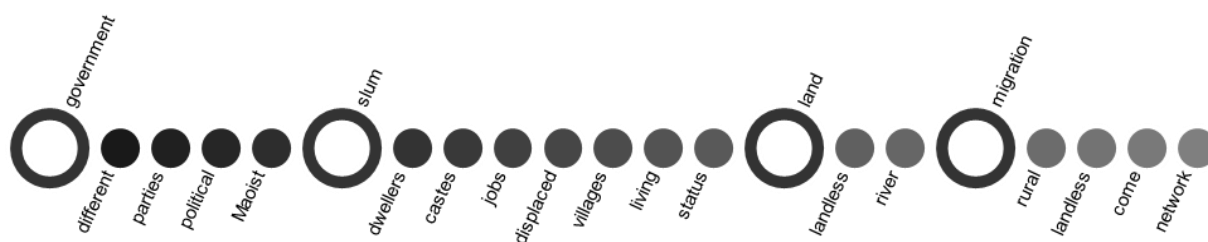


Figure 4.14 Local NGOs' discourse



Figure 4.15 International organisations' discourse

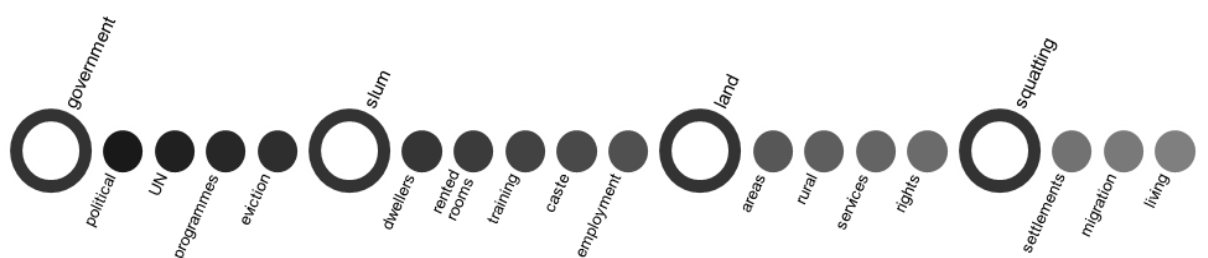
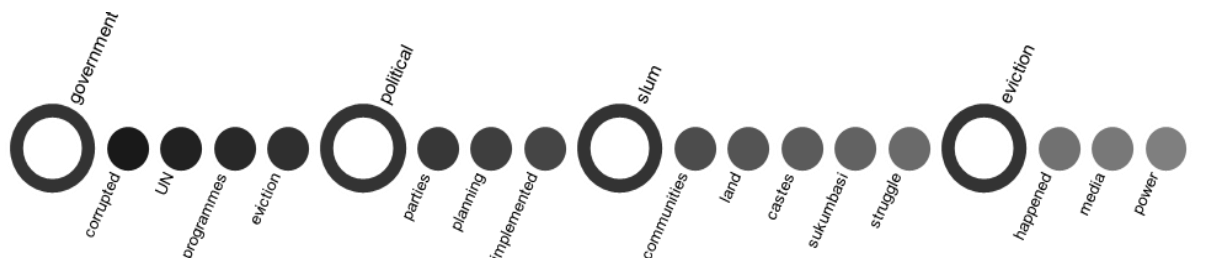


Figure 4.16 Journalists' discourse



The multiplicity of actors engaged in shaping slum representations therefore resulted in a diversity of standpoints related to squatter settlements. It can be found that regularisation and incorporation of these settlements in Kathmandu, a city with contested spaces, could have benefited from an more homogenous approach regarding (1) what constitutes a slum area and how slum dwellers organise their living, (2) the social function of the slum in a complex urban fabric, and (3) the extent to which political parties, the government and power struggles gave rise to a specific understanding of the slum area as shaped by events and external representations expressed by the rest of the population. The following belief maps (**Figures 4.17 to 4.21**) present a more in-depth and qualitative approach to analysing local actors' discourses, building upon the

⁹⁹ Compiled using word count and stop list of frequent/short words ('and', 'then', etc.)

quantitative assessment of each actor's depiction of the Thapathali area's workings and dynamics. The circles represent the main themes by average size of occurrence in key informants' interviews, illustrative quotes are attached to the main themes according to their recurrence in the different discourses. Red is used in places where such themes were associated with negative sentiment words and the strength of the links connecting the different sub-themes is depicted using either plain lines (strong link) or dotted lines (weak link). In addition to the four local actors' discourse, a subsequent belief map was drawn based on the same methodology using the local press articles presented as part of the sources of data in the methodology section¹⁰⁰.

Social stigma around landlessness

The land tenure discourse in the context of Nepal tends to incorporate a strong social stigma associated with the landless, which in the context of the changing agrarian economy and rapid urbanisation patterns results in highly contested city spaces. Actors' perceptions reflect a crucial aspect of how social representations of slum areas and slum dwellers emerge in the context of Nepal's capital city. The land tenure discourse indicates a strong social stigma around being landless (landless in rural areas, landless in urban areas), which underlines the complex relationship between rural areas and rural/urban migration dynamics. Ownership of land, namely agricultural land, is associated with several social representations in the present socio-economic structure: first, land ownership is regarded as a major livelihood generation source in the Nepalese context, with a high proportion of the Nepalese society still being engaged in agricultural activities (CBS 2008); secondly, the land tenure discourse regards land as a primary indicator of socio-economic status (Dhakal 2011). In the same vein, Sen states, *"landlessness is similar to an instrumental deprivation. A family without land in a peasant society may be deeply handicapped. (...). But whether or not a family attaches direct value to its relation with its own land, landlessness can also help to generate economic and social deprivations. Indeed the alienation of land has been – appropriately enough – a much discussed problem in the development literature"* (quoted from Adhikari 2008: 93-94). Social stigma therefore anchors the poverty debate around land ownership, rather than around social exclusion or low income levels. Poverty is depicted in local actors' discourses as being highly and almost exclusively related to housing, housing conditions and rural landlessness as a reason for migration, which highlight the linkages between rural and urban populations: while being landless in the rural areas is associated with low social status and poverty, being landless in urban areas is marked by a similar social stigma, as reason for migration generally implied rural landlessness (*"people in villages have a certain amount of land, assets, but it is not enough. So they migrate to the city – except that there, they have nothing"* (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013; refer to **Figure 4.18**)). Landlessness in rural areas is associated with forced migration dynamics, referred to as 'internal displacement': *"'sukumbasis' [the landless] represents a large part of the slum population. We call them sukumbasi, the landless people. They are from different parts of Nepal. They find a better living in city areas, they squat on riverbanks and public land. They move here for jobs; life in rural areas is difficult, there are droughts, floods, erosion, landslides"* (Academics, Interviews, 2013; refer to **Figure 4.17**). As a result, spatial dynamics in the Kathmandu Valley appear to be shaped not only

¹⁰⁰ Refer to Chapter 3.

by the socio-economic structure of the urban population – low income populations having no other choice than settling in squatter areas –, but by landlessness as a social marker of poverty, which equally applies to rural and urban contexts: “urban poverty is only becoming distinct nowadays, urban livelihoods are new issues. There are distinct factors pulling the migrants from rural to urban areas: the productivity of land is not very high, so that men in villages migrate first and then they try to settle in Kathmandu and bring other members of their families” (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013). With a changing agrarian economy and rapid urbanisation patterns resulting in highly contested city spaces and slum formation in the timeframe of a decade, Kathmandu has witnessed a radical change in the use and occupation of its space, which has been interpreted from the lens of land ownership and related debates. The resulting social stigma around squatters and slum settlements has evolved towards a complex system of social representations and perceptions, which – under the pressure of various structural factors – has turned actors away from incremental housing strategies.

Figure 4.17 Academics’ qualitative belief map

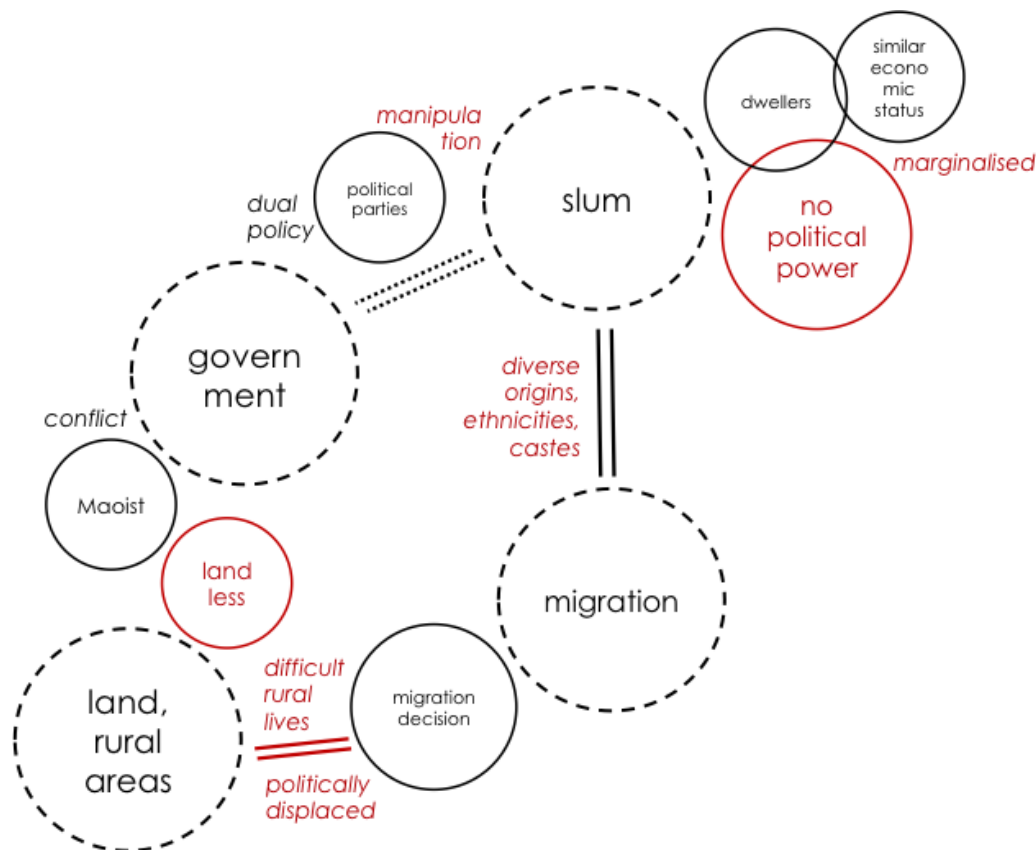
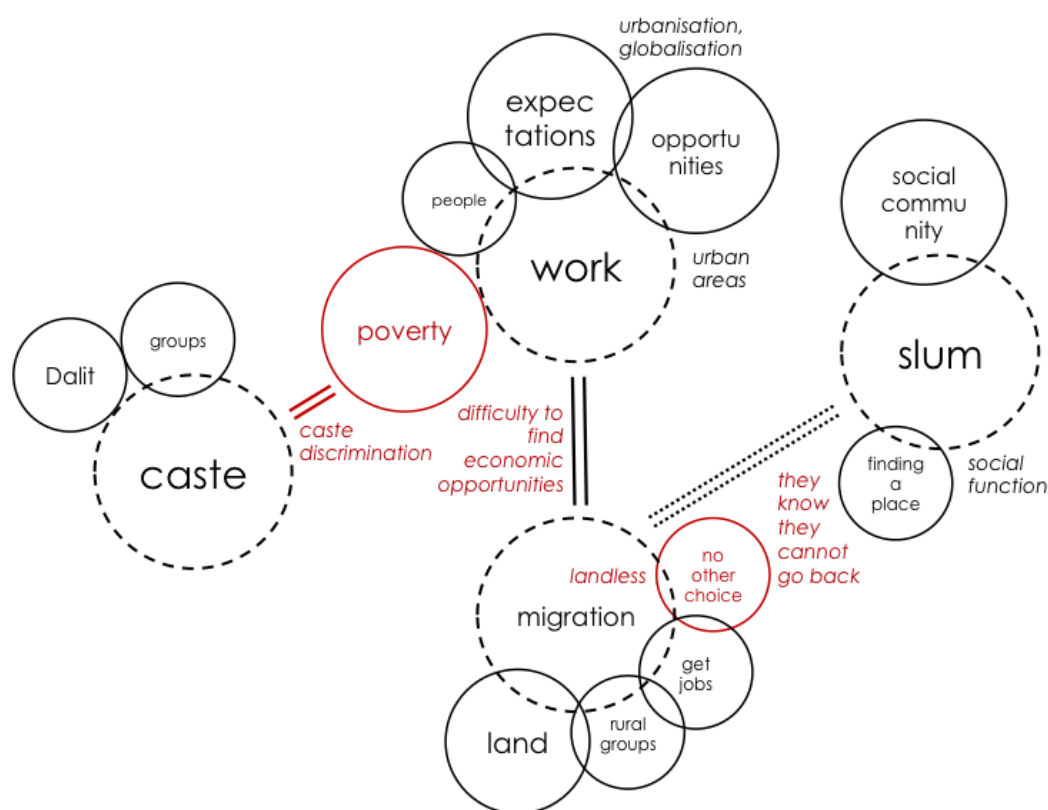


Figure 4.18 Local NGOs' qualitative belief map



Social representations of the 'fake landless'

The polarisation of the land ownership debate between 'fake' *landless urban slum dwellers* still owning land in the villages and who came to Kathmandu for better livelihood opportunities, and the *actual landless population* has led to differentiated representations about sub-standard housing and its function in a fast-developing city. An interesting aspect of the sub-standard housing debate in Kathmandu relates to the perception of slum dwellers as being 'fake' landless – "opportunistic", and reinforces the idea that the right to the city and its contested spaces is only granted to those at the bottom of the social ladder, the 'actual' landless people: "in order to get help from the government, slum dwellers claim that they are landless, even if some of them do have land in the villages. And it is difficult for the government to find out about their land. So people become opportunistic. With the open border situation with India¹⁰¹, even Indian people come to Kathmandu and claim they are landless Nepali people" (Academics, Interviews, 2013); "a couple of years ago, the government found out that there were real slums and fake slums. They decided to offer financial help to slum dwellers who would come and prove they had poor living conditions. And only 40% of the total slum population came to claim assistance" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013). The notions of choice and preferences have been partly evicted from the land tenure debate, as stated by several actors: "it is not because you have land that you should stay a farmer: Many people come even though they are well off in the villages, even though they have land and property over there. People still want to come to

¹⁰¹ As per the open border policy between India and Nepal, Nepalese and Indian nationals may move freely across the border without passports or visas and may live and work in either country.

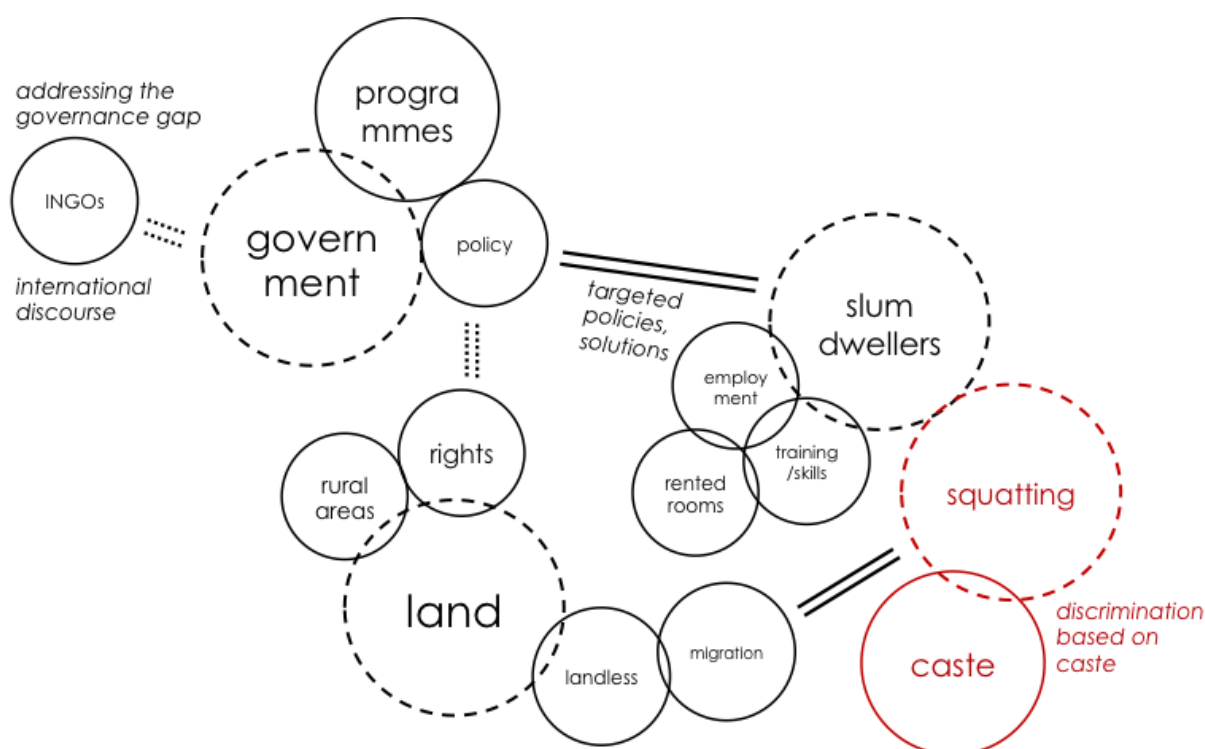
Kathmandu, maybe for facilities, schools, health centres. They do not want to work in agriculture anymore so they come to the city area" (Academics, Interviews, 2013). As a result, contested city spaces in the context of high priced land in the Kathmandu Valley have led to differentiated representations about informal spaces and their use: "in some slum areas, people tell these stories that some people are actually rich and they rent houses to the poor in order to get access to the land" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013); "the issue is that some slums are not really slums. The idea of a slum is a set of small houses with land for agricultural purpose. But since land is very costly in Kathmandu, people pretend they have no money, they go live in slum areas though they have a house elsewhere. They stay there and they obtain the land" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013). Incremental housing approaches are therefore part of the debate, as slum dwellers but to a larger extent some other fringes of the Kathmandu population as well, try to put pressure on the government in order to get land titles in the occupied areas. The right to the city for slum dwellers – either owning land in rural areas or being landless – therefore brings the landless debate to a paradoxical situation, in which sub-standard city spaces have a limited incorporating function for rural migrants, especially in the case of forced migration due to civil conflict: "with the insurgency, many people have had the feeling that rural areas were less safe than the urban areas. Even those who were better off in the villages migrated to Kathmandu, but most of them could not sell their lands before migrating, so they came to Kathmandu and were as poor as the ones migrating for economic reasons. They settled in slum areas as well" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013; refer to **Figure 4.18**). The power struggle between slum dwellers and local authorities is therefore central in defining who has the 'right' to occupy sub-standard city spaces. The eviction process and the resulting social trauma are anchored in this dichotomous vision of landlessness, which has also been used by political parties to put pressure on the government: "eviction was not a new policy from the government, the government asked them to leave a long time ago. The media exposed this as inhumanity, but it is a power struggle between slum dwellers and the government. Political parties have trade unions and they relate to slum dwellers. But political parties are using this to show they have power in the power struggle" (Journalists, Interviews, 2013; refer to **Figure 4.20**). For these reasons, slum areas in Kathmandu have become more than a simple land dispute, "slums are a political topic, they show the limits of law enforcement. It is a very fragile space" (Journalists, Interviews, 2013).

The city fabric: Incorporation versus eviction

The rationale of the Nepalese government for eviction of visible slum areas questioned the logics of sub-standard housing as a means of incorporating migrant populations to the city space. Understanding the rationale behind the eviction process has proven a difficult task in the context of Thapathali slum settlement. Reasons given by various actors and the government itself for using forced eviction as the last resort option range from the threat of river pollution caused by slum dwellers organising their living along the Bagmati riverside ("in Thapathali, the government tried to evict the people living there because it is government land, and mostly because it is located next to the river and slum dwellers pollute these areas" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013)) to the government's lack of information regarding the slum population and the resulting social unrest it could provoke ("the government wants to get rid of the slum areas and register these populations. Especially since there have been a couple of issues with the people living there,

some of them were not exactly poor people and they were owning land over there" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013)). As local actors' discourses indicate, relocation and incremental housing approaches were part of the debate ("eviction and relocation are difficult though, because people living in the areas where slum dwellers should be relocated are usually unhappy with having new comers. A couple of months ago, these people organised a protest and they managed to stop a relocation programme initiated by the local authorities" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013)), although the lack of a clear urban planning strategy and the absence of official documents outlining the rationale for eviction created confusion among the slum population and various actors involved in designing relocation alternatives. Reasons for eviction become more evident as one regards the Thapathali slum area as a space where the political stakes are considerable: "the Thapathali case has multifolded interests. The government wants to have infrastructures along the riverbanks, but the riverbanks are encroached by the squatter settlements. Thapathali is a recent settlement, dated back to 2007 or 2008. But it is not solely about infrastructures, government is also concerned with the visual pollution, since people can see the squatting area from the Bagmati bridge. Other settlements in Kathmandu are behind the main roads, most of them are concealed" (International Organisations, Interviews, 2013; refer to **Figure 4.19**). Another key component of the eviction rationale lies in the government trying to settle its legitimacy as a planning authority and the extent to which local authorities have a say in defining the legitimacy of illegality ("the government doesn't want to provide health facilities or any type of facilities to slum dwellers, as it would make the slum look almost like a legal place, a formal place of residence for the families living there" (Academics, Interviews, 2013); "they [government officials] established the fact they can evict anytime anyplace" (International Organisations, Interviews, 2013)). Political stakes encompass even wider concerns, mainly due to the fact that the slum area was populated following a political demonstration in 2006 during which small shacks were built in a couple of days on government owned land. Thapathali's recent status as a squatting area made it an attractive space for political parties and political strands opposed to the government to enrol slum populations ("they [slum dwellers] always try to find political protection from political parties, and political parties need them as well. It is a convenient situation" (International Organisations, Interviews, 2013)). A consequence of the politicisation of slum dwellers and their involvement in meso-level politics has been the confusion around what slum populations' interests were and to what extent they could negotiate with local authorities: "there was no proper relocation programme organised for them. The government offered a 3 month rent allowance but that is not sufficient, this was not a permanent solution. (...) The government tried to find out who had land and asked people who did not have land property to come and fill forms, and if they filled the requirements they could get help from the government. But what happened is that some community leaders asked people not to go and fill these forms, because some people do have land. After that, government decided on the eviction. There was a communication gap here, and there were divisions within the community as well. It weakened their positions" (International Organisations, Interviews, 2013). Incorporation of migrant populations in rapidly urbanising Kathmandu therefore took the shape of a power struggle between slum dwellers, political parties and governmental authorities, while social fragmentation grew between the different socio-economic groups after the eviction took place.

Figure 4.19 International organisations' qualitative belief map



'Permanent temporariness' after the eviction

Uncertain living conditions following the eviction process and the convoluted dynamics of incremental housing processes were the main factors behind the troubled negotiations between the government and slum dwellers. Kathmandu city planning became difficult to manage, especially after the migration waves linked to conflict in 1996 and between 2001 and 2003. Beyond this push factor, there is also a pull factor related to education and income migrants are looking for in Kathmandu, the combination of which gives little incentive or alternatives for migrants to move back to the rural areas. "In slum areas, some people stay hoping for the government to give them land rights, even though they are not exactly landless since they have land in the countryside. Government sometimes gives them land or constructed houses in some areas" (Academics, Interviews, 2013). In the aftermath of the eviction, several aspects of the legitimacy of sub-standard settlements became a central concern regarding the uncertain future of Thapathali slum dwellers. As the evicted populations stayed on the land, they started to build temporary huts with plastic and cardboard materials, following the idea that most of the slum dwellers cannot or do not want to go back to the rural areas ("Kathmandu was a sort of promised land"¹⁰² (Academics, Interviews, 2013)) and claim a form of legitimacy over the occupation of the Bagmati riverbanks. In this sense, the eviction of the Thapathali area did not succeed in expelling the slum population: "it shows the government has no strong or clear policy. It is very unclear, there are no plans for slum people" (Local NGOs, Interviews, 2013). Lack of communication between the different stakeholders and uncertainty regarding the living conditions of the roofless slum dwellers have turned the eviction situation into a situation of inertia, of do-nothingness, which

¹⁰² Refer to 4.4 for a detailed discussion of the 'dreamt city' and migrants' motives and expectations.

is worsened by the uncertain political situation of the government. Different government offices are involved in urban planning and ministries are constantly re-organised, which makes the designation of responsible bodies difficult and contributes to the immobilism strategy.

Figure 4.20 Journalists' qualitative belief map

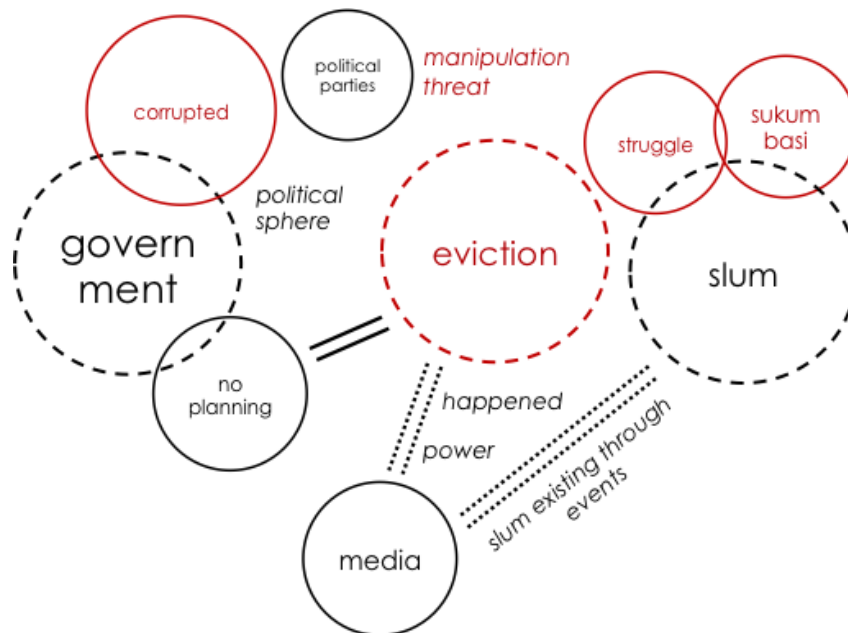
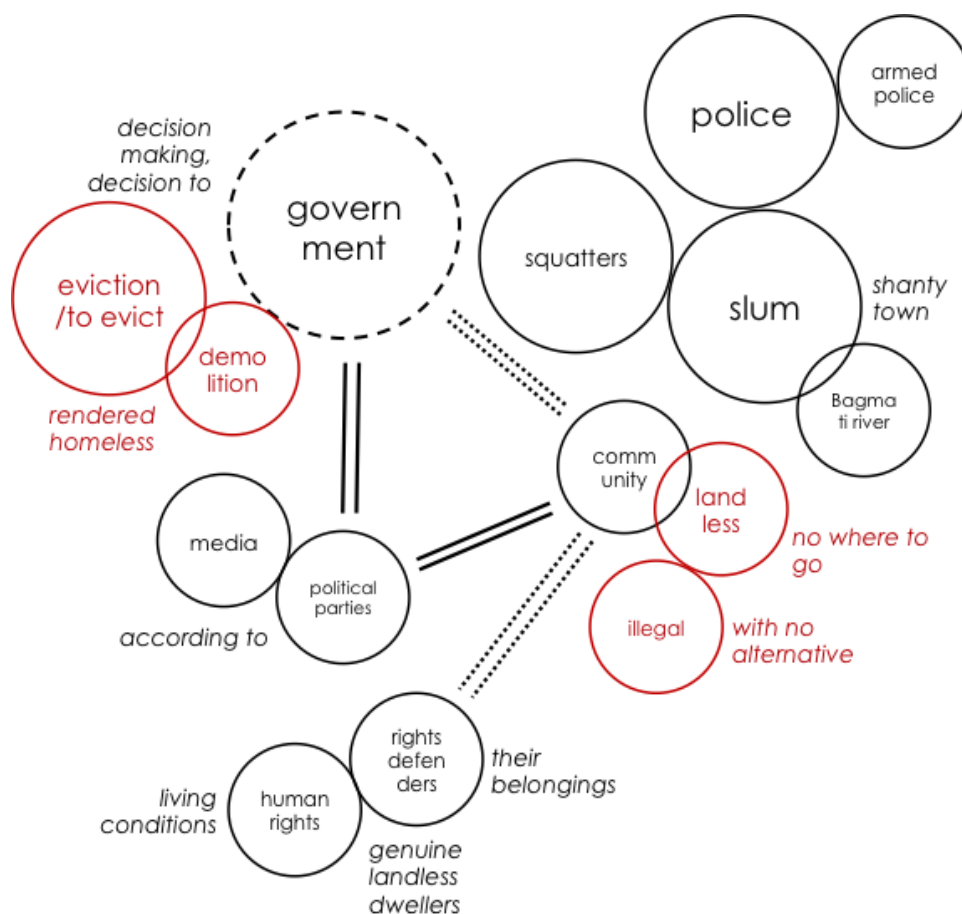


Figure 4.21 Qualitative belief map based on local press review



Consequences for micro-level structures in the Thapathali community

Based on the analysis presented above, it appears that the diverse social representations associated with the Thapathali slum settlement, the meso-level dynamics of eviction in a fast growing city, and the limitations to incremental housing approaches in developing city contexts are largely influenced by land ownership meanings and patterns of sub-standard space illegal occupation. Interestingly, the *legitimacy of illegality* draws upon various social views – those of political leaders, local authorities, urban middle-class and elites, the media – and the processes attached to arbitrating who is entitled to informal city spaces have crucial consequences for the micro-level structures affecting the squatters' decision space.

The aftermath of the eviction events can be described as both having disruptive consequences on the shared identity of the squatting community and as an identity-building event, while the lack of a community leader and the discourse around the betrayal from both the government and the slum dwellers who moved out of the community as a result of negotiations with the local authorities is dominant among the squatting population who remained on the Thapathali land. Nevertheless, the establishment of a 'grand narrative' following the eviction events can be understood as creating new forms of interactions and new ways of living together, as the community found ways of coping with the destruction of their homes and engaged in self-help networks whereby households look after one another's belongings. Consequences for the micro-level structures affecting the squatters' decision space are multiple, and both the resulting social inertia and coping strategies put in place by local residents can be interpreted as new forms of imitative strategies: engaging in informal activities providing enough flexibility for workers to extend their working hours and compensate for the asset loss during the forced eviction, use of rural-urban networks in order to access financial or in-kind support from the rural areas, children being sent to their parents' home villages to be cared for by members of the extended family while the household recovers from the external negative shock on household expenditures entailed by the destruction of houses and other assets, etc. As a general pattern, it can be observed that the household arena has provided a fall-back space for Thapathali's local residents to cope with the eviction events, as the reordering of household level strategies related to making a living witnessed the uptake of informal activities of additional household members to provide the household with the means of surviving the eviction. The settlement's function was therefore strongly affected, in terms of to the extent to which the Thapathali slum area can still be conceived as a transitional space to other parts of the city and as a place to access informal employment opportunities before moving to higher standard situations.

As the building of small huts made of plastic and cardboard took place on the field of destroyed brick houses left by the bulldozers after the eviction events, the reshaping of a shared social space has been articulated around a collectively-lived traumatic event in which the government is depicted as having the entire responsibility of the current situation of Thapathali squatters, left with no other alternative nor immediate relocation plans. Sharing the post-eviction living conditions has formed a common understanding among the remaining squatters that the local authorities will have to provide them with a longer term solution; if not a relocation plan, the squatters are still hoping and waiting for a formal recognition of their rights to occupy the Thapathali area, from where the government failed to evict them. The resulting inner social

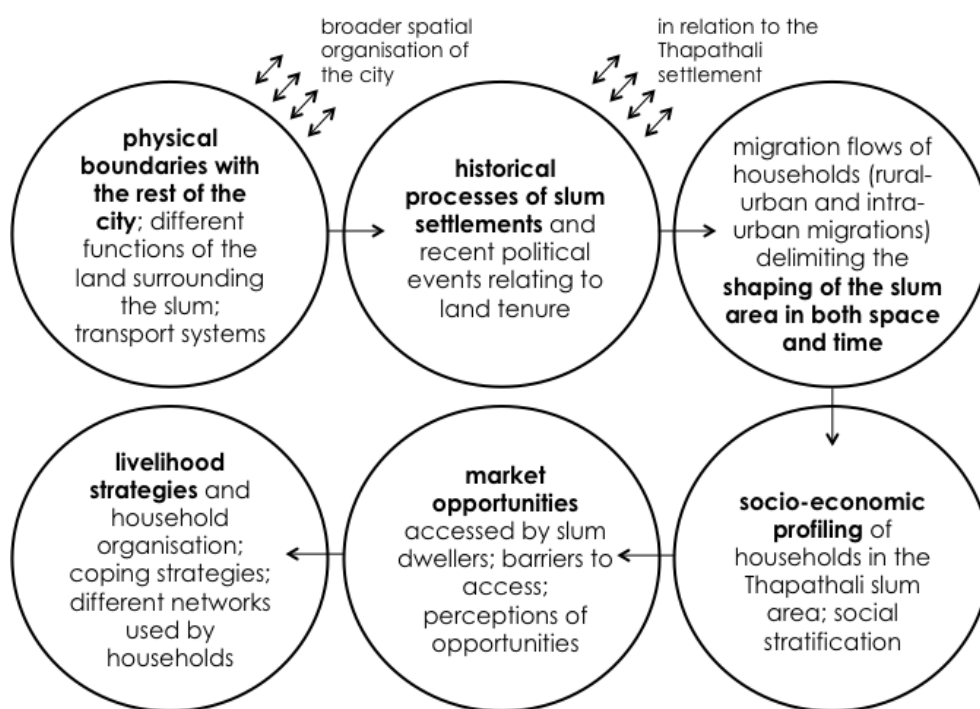
structures shaping the Thapathali community can therefore be interpreted as flattened social structures, as every squatter was left with no brick house nor productive assets (bicycles, sewing machine, provisions for tea shops, etc.). Decision-making processes are being re-assessed through the lens of these phenomena, and the state of continuous occupancy of the Thapathali land can be read as a sign of further imbrication within the wider logics of Kathmandu's urban social and economic fabric. By failing to evict the squatting populations, the government almost 'granted' a formal existence to the area and its inhabitants, further relayed in the media's portrayal of the urban middle class' representations of the eviction events.

Consequently, reference to the period of study which involved a recent eviction situation and associated political events that took place in the aftermath of the eviction is central to the research, as consequences can be found at the level of the micro-level structures affecting the squatters' decision space. While the particularity of the situation has been emphasised in this chapter and contextual elements were underlined along with their potential influence on the collected data, the case study under consideration is purposely not labelled as a post-eviction situation for the scope of this research, due to the specific objectives of the research which links to decision-making processes and the extent to which these are anchored in longer periods of time compared to events which occurred a year ago. The following chapter therefore builds upon this case study presentation and presents an in-depth analysis of the data collected as part of this research, by focusing on the decision environment in which Thapathali's agents make decisions related to their livings.

5. The decision environment

Following the presentation of the context of study, the research investigates the ways in which the environment and the perceptions of the environment are observed to affect slum dwellers' decision-making, in relation to making a living (**Phase 1** of the methodological approach). As a first step towards achieving this, this chapter presents a mapping of the micro-level structures framing the normative environment (norms and social representations) in which agents make decisions. The mapping of the decision space follows the steps outlined in **Figure 5.1**. The methodological approach (**Phase 1**) is described in **Table 5.2**.

Figure 5.1 Mapping the decision space



Firstly, this chapter aims to set a deeper understanding of the social representations within the Thapathali slum settlement and how these are experienced as shaping the physical and mental spaces for the squatting population. Both shaped and maintained at the level of the slum settlement, the **living-together representations** (**Section 5.1**) described in this section are identified through a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with Thapathali households. The aim is to highlight the relative influence of the slum space, as a confined space, on the social representations shared by slum dwellers.

Secondly, the **socio-economic conditions** (**Section 5.2**) of the Thapathali squatters are presented using primary data collected as part of the household survey and benchmarked against statistics at both national and city levels. This second section aims at unravelling the similarities and differences in living conditions within the Thapathali settlement, whereby social heterogeneity can be observed beyond apparent similarities across poverty situations. It gives a detailed background to the objective socio-economic conditions experienced by slum dwellers,

before conducting a more qualitative analysis of aspects of the inner-slum class structure. The variables of interest explored are: differences in poverty by gender, age, household size, household inner structure, religion, ethnicity, caste, education level and origin of migrant. Additionally, the **representations associated with social structures within the community (Section 5.2)** entailed by inhabiting a shared space are explored and give an in-depth account of the decision space for making a living experienced by slum dwellers – both shaped by living conditions and the representations associated with these conditions.

Thirdly, another important aspect defining the Thapathali community mind-set and slum dwellers' social representations lies in the **influence of the rural-urban nexus (Section 5.3)**. By shaping the reasons for migration, the inner-city migration patterns, the types of first employment found by slum dwellers at the time of migration and the subsequent visits and support from rural communities, the extended family and the squatters' anchors in rural areas contribute to an enclosed living space in Thapathali and contribute to the ways in which households engage with integrating their livelihood strategies into the wider city dynamics.

Finally, the **economic opportunities accessed by Thapathali squatters (Section 5.4)** are presented in this chapter using primary data collected as part of the household survey. Livelihood strategies are explored and explained across various dimensions. The differences between activities carried out by the main and the secondary/ tertiary earners are also investigated. Finally, transport and place of work, along with the perceived barriers to accessing opportunities as expressed by slum dwellers are presented in this fourth section, before exploring the coping strategies households follow when facing hardship periods.

Caution should apply while reading the findings related to the decision environment, as these only reflect the viewpoints of a sample of the total population living in Thapathali (50 households out of approximately 200 households).

Table 5.2 Methodological approach for data analysis

Phase and objective	Type of analysis	Data used for the analysis
<i>Phase 1: The decision space</i>		
Mapping exercise: Investigating strategies related to making a living	Descriptive analysis	Household survey
	Discourse analysis	Key informant interviews and interviews with slum dwellers
	Contextual analysis	Field observations and secondary data sources

5.1 Living-together representations within the physical boundaries of the Thapathali slum settlement

Based on the evidence collected, the living-together representations identified at the community level are found to be articulated between an internal and an external set of perceptions and rules – shaped and shared by the squatters (internal) and influenced by external actors' representations (external). The 'togetherness' of living is shaped by external pressures and interactions with the wider city fabric (urban labour and housing markets, local authorities,

municipality and government's roles), which appears to delimit the space of representations within which individuals form opinions, assess situations and eventually make their decisions.

Community perceptions of an 'inside' and an 'outside' Thapathali

According to the sample of slum dwellers interviewed, a primary finding and entry point to living-together representations at the level of the Thapathali slum area relates to the occurrence of discrimination and discriminative practices based on caste groups within and outside the slum area. Belonging to low caste groups implies an 'effective' discrimination, although, based on the evidence collected, only taking place outside the boundaries of the slum community. Rules about untouchability and other low caste groups are not perceived as existing within the slum space, by contrast with the rest of the city where slum dwellers feel judged and discriminated against because of their caste groups. Discrimination tends to be less among the low caste groups as a feeling of homogeneity is perceived by low caste members. The existence of discrimination and sense of belonging to a low caste is only legitimised through contacts with higher caste groups – discriminations which often only take place outside the boundaries of the slum area where higher caste groups have the *legitimacy* to exert power and caste domination:

Untouchability does not mean discrimination in the slum area. But outside, when you try to rent a room for instance, it is quite difficult. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

Some people are gossiping about caste, but I'd rather not listen to them. They are from higher castes. (...) In villages it is worse. There are still untouchability rules. Here it is getting better, it is just gossiping, there are no real rules about untouchability anymore. (head, male, 30, office helper)

While the discussion around caste groups goes beyond a simplified account of high versus low caste groups¹⁰³, it constitutes an interesting finding that supports the idea of rules existing specifically *within* the boundaries of the slum area – as opposed to the traditional rules that can be observed in rural settings or in other parts of the capital city. These community-specific rules appear to have been strengthened by the eviction events and the narrative slum dwellers have built around it. More specifically, the eviction has been perceived as a disruptive event whereby external actors have crossed the physical boundaries of Thapathali and contributed to the perception of an 'inside' and an 'outside' Thapathali:

There are tensions with the government, but no tensions within the slum area. We were watching after each other's houses after the destruction. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

Several times, the government has come to destroy slum areas. (...) Of course when there are elections, the government leaves us alone." (head, male, 60, mechanics)

Everyone came here with hope, but the government did nothing but to break our houses. (spouse, female, 40, unskilled construction worker)

¹⁰³ This topic is further explored as part of Chapter 6. This section only aims at presenting the evidence relating to the living-together representations within the physical boundaries of the Thapathali slum settlement.

The identity-building role of the intrusion of legal authorities

With the government's and local authorities' interventions, the eviction process saw the sudden entrance of legitimated authorities (external actors legitimised by their governmental functions) within the space of Thapathali and its dedicated set of rules. The community dwellers, as inhabitants of an enclosed space, perceived the eviction events as a *disruption* coming from 'outside' – which was later interpreted as an identity-building event for the community. During the interviews conducted with the slum dwellers, the government was referred to as a symbolic external actor embodying authority (repetitive use of 'the government' along with action verbs such as 'thinks', 'gave', 'going'), intruding the shared space of slum dwellers:

Then the government thinks we are wealthy and they come to destroy our houses. (head, male, 48, security guard)

(...) others get worried that the government is going to come again and destroy everything. (spouse, female, 40, NGO worker)

The eviction was largely interpreted as a shared event affecting the community as a whole, based on the evidence collected from respondents. As such, the events had an identity-building role (linked to the importance of establishing an identity after the events) through a shared facing of adversity and the strengthening of community links *within* the geographical space. Beyond the idea of a shared event at community level, the emerging image of the government and 'richer' slum dwellers¹⁰⁴ as external negatively-perceived actors (shared responsibility for events of 'richer' slum dwellers and the government) appears to have worked as a catalyst for smoothing the existing *internal* tensions within the slum space. The idea of identity-building mechanisms is based on shared experience, and the feeling of 'back to being the same':

We heard that the government would be providing land to the landless, so we came to Thapathali and settled there. Everyone came suddenly. But then the government actually made us homeless by destroying our homes. (spouse, female, 40, unskilled construction worker)

There are social classes here, and tensions. Someone got rich and was able to build a two floor house, then the government came and destroyed the houses. (head, male, 52, unskilled construction worker)

The issue is that there is jealousy. I was able to build a house here and people got jealous. People were gossiping. Now we're all back to being the same. (head, male, 33, skilled construction worker)

The Thapathali paradox: The privilege of illegal occupation and tolerance from local authorities versus the eviction events

Beyond the observation that slum 'inner cohesion' was 'reinstated' as a result of the eviction events, the symbolic establishment of a *community identity* took place in the first years of the existence of the slum settlement. As evidenced by the slum dwellers' representations, the

¹⁰⁴ The variations in the socio-economic situation of the sampled households in the Thapathali community are presented in Chapter 5.

'foundation moment' of the recently formed slum, seven years ago, is still significantly impregnated in memories as a symbolic event:

We lived in a rented room to start with, for 15 years. We found out about it through my husband's friends. Then we heard that government was providing land for the homeless and landless, so we came and moved to Thapathali. We were here when the settlement started. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

The spontaneity of settlement is reflected in the common narrative surrounding slum areas in general; but, simultaneously, this is an *unusual* setting of the Thapathali case study. The physical boundaries and informal delimitations of the slum space are represented as symbolic and defining aspects of the Thapathali living space, and further evidence of the inside/outside dichotomy lies in the viewpoint conveyed by most Thapathali inhabitants regarding the potential new settlers in their 'owned' and shared space. The perception is of a distinctive community being now 'set in stone' after the spontaneous and 'foundation moment' that took place seven years ago – newcomers are not welcomed to settle in the area, in spite of its low density and potential to house new migrants. The way into settling in the Thapathali community after this date has only been through knowing family members already living in the area, who saved a plot of land for their kin, suggesting a feeling of ownership over the Thapathali land among its first settlers:

(...) Then we moved to Thapathali in order to save money. My aunt lived here already, so she told us about it. (head, male, 30, office helper)

As all current slum dwellers came to settle in the enclosed Thapathali space at the same time, there is a shared feeling of being – to a certain extent – 'privileged', entitled and empowered to occupying an illegal space, having been recognised by the government as legitimate settlers at some point in time – even though the legitimacy dates back to seven years ago and was deeply questioned by the sudden and violent eviction events in 2012:

New migrants cannot come to this community. The government made us fill forms when we moved here, so that newcomers cannot come anymore. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

About new migrants, we do not let them stay in this community. We already struggle for space, so it is difficult to have new people. (head, male, 42, driver/ticker counter)

The inside/outside dichotomy of the Thapathali slum space is further expressed as part of slum dwellers' representations of local authorities, which have been fairly consistent before and after the eviction process. It appears that the local authorities such as the police do not disturb the income-generating activities taking place *within* the physical space of the slum area, which is therefore considered a safe space for informal vending activities. Slum dwellers tend to establish teashops or grocery shops within this space, as opposed to engaging with street vending *outside* Thapathali. The sustainability of this livelihood model remains bounded in several aspects, as there is an upper threshold to the number of slum dwellers who would be able to conduct such vending activities due to the limitations of the demand within the Thapathali settlement. The establishment of a parallel economy within the enclosed slum space is however the result of individual-level strategies which congregate as a community-level model where informal vending is allowed, perceived as legitimate and chosen as a potential coping strategy for engaging with income-

generating activities while bypassing the constraints associated with the wider city-level formal market.

Street vending is becoming more and more difficult. The government and municipality do not let us do business. I used to be a street vendor but I stopped for this reason. (head, male, 30, former street vendor)

Life has become worse than before. Before, you could do good business, but the municipality now does not allow street vending. (spouse, female, 35, street vendor)

Some people are doing their own business. Like small street vending, tea shops, selling fruits. But people do things independently. They just do what they can. (head, male, 27, catering)

Having a teashop here gives you a good social status. You earn good money, I've seen people doing this. (head, male, 34, unskilled construction worker)

An enclosed urban space whose primary function is to provide shelter; by contrast, access to opportunities depends on one's ability to establish connections outside the settlement area

In more general aspects, the physical space of Thapathali is defined by its housing and sheltering function (an *internal* function to cope within urban city dynamics and inaccessible formal housing markets) and by the extent to which the squatters manage to make a living outside the slum area (opportunities for making a living being sought *outside* due to the limitations of the informal market economy within the Thapathali slum area). The *living* space emerges by contrast with *opportunities* sought outside Thapathali:

My husband brings money from outside and I manage household expenses. (spouse, female, 58, unskilled construction worker)

The inside/outside dichotomy can be illustrated by the importance of networking and engaging with groups *outside* the slum area in order to get an enhanced and facilitated access to opportunities. The slum community is therefore highly dependent on the links established outside the community circle, demonstrating the limitations and weaknesses of having an enclosed space within which strategies are *undifferentiated* and individuals end up having similar livelihood strategies:

I think there are power struggles when it comes to finding a job. You need to know the right person. First you need the right type of skills, and then the contacts. People who are going to give you work are not the ones in Thapathali, you need to have better contacts than that. (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)

My husband still does construction work, but it is difficult to find a regular position. It is fine when you have contacts outside Thapathali. (spouse, female, 50, domestic worker)

The physical delimitations of the community therefore exist through the idea that making a living and related opportunities cannot come from *within* the living space; there is a living-together aspect (internal) which is reinforced by the knowledge that, for most of the slum dwellers, making a living has to be sought outside the slum area (external). What most slum dwellers have in common are long working hours *outside* the community, as evidenced by the feeling of indifference and lack of cohesion regarding opportunities found outside the boundaries

of the community – in contrast with the representation that slum dwellers in the Thapathali area form a unified group where one systematically helps another.

The community spirit is not really good, people don't know each other because they work for long hours outside of Thapathali. Then they don't help each other because they don't know each other. (head, male, 34, skilled construction worker)

It is difficult to say what others think about your work. I go to work early in the morning and I don't come back until late. So I have no idea what people think. (spouse, female, 26, sewing work from home)

We don't know many people here. My family works all day long in the sewing shop, they don't interact with people much. I don't really know about community tensions. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

The community thinks it is good to be going abroad for work. Because you can earn more money. About driving, it's ok as well. (...) But people do not say much, everyone is busy with his own life. (head, male, 38, office helper)

The urban enclave as a delimited pool of available labour force

Beyond the representations shared by slum dwellers within the Thapathali enclosed space, external views classify the slum area as a delimited pool of available labour force, where contractors (construction sites, factories) looking for cheap workforce come to find workers. This is a further example of the mental representations associated with a specific geographical space, which therefore give and legitimise the slum space as a space with an existence of its own and a function embedded into the wider urban labour market dynamics.

Contractors know about Thapathali and they come here to find workers. (head, male, 34, skilled construction worker)

I started construction work after moving here. People came to look for workers and I went. Before I used to work in a factory making bricks. But it was hard conditions and not really well paid. (head, male, 34, unskilled construction worker)

Regarding the transport aspects of accessing opportunities for making a living, the slum space is often represented as an enclave, although certain groups of slum dwellers are doing better than others at decreasing the burden of transport costs through the possession of productive assets such as bicycles.

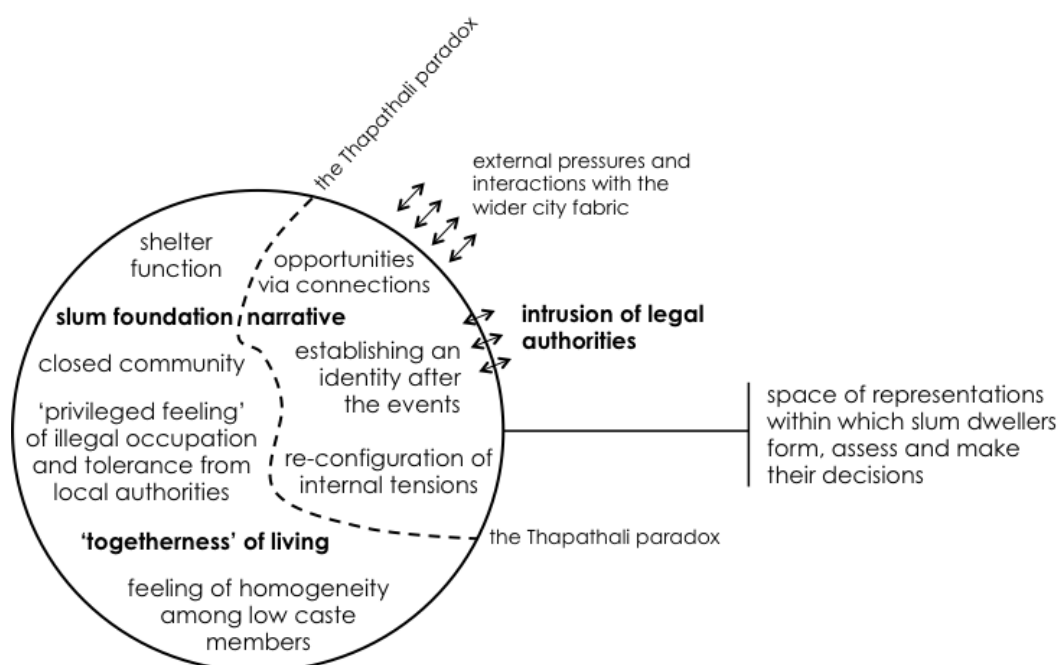
This area feels like an enclave. People have to go far away to find opportunities. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

With the bicycle, it is ok to find jobs, even far away. (head, male, 38, meat shop owner)

The social representations within the Thapathali slum settlement are therefore experienced as delimiting the physical and mental boundaries for the squatting population. **Figure 5.3** highlights the channels of influence of the slum space as a confined space on worldviews and representations shared by slum dwellers. The 'Thapathali paradox' line indicates the differences in living-together representations: on the one hand, slum dwellers express a 'togetherness of living', in a closed community, with a 'privileged feeling' of illegal occupation; on the other hand, slum

dwellers' discourse is tainted by the effects of the intrusion of authorities, their reliance on the wider city fabric and the existence of internal tensions.

Figure 5.3 Influence of the slum space – a confined space – on the social representations shared by slum dwellers¹⁰⁵



5.2 Socio-demographic characteristics and poverty profiles of Thapathali households: A homogenous space?

After presenting the relative influence of the slum confined space, this next section aims at unravelling the similarities and differences in living conditions *within* the Thapathali settlement – by establishing poverty profiles. It is hypothesised that social heterogeneity can be observed beyond apparent similarities across poverty situations. Poverty profiles are tabulated across different socio-demographic statistics compiled at the level of the Thapathali community, showing differences in poverty by gender, age, household size, household inner structure, religion, ethnicity, caste, education level and origin of migrant. Income distribution is explored and explained across these various dimensions which give a detailed background to the objective socio-economic conditions experienced by slum dwellers, before conducting a more qualitative analysis of the aspects of the inner-slum class structure.

The inner-slum social structure presents informative characteristics for a community in which objective socio-economic variables were found to differ considerably from one household to another. A precarious balance was found between similarities and differences experienced by slum dwellers, who build their own social representations of the community social structures

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed explanation of the 'Thapathali paradox', refer to above sub-section "The Thapathali paradox: The privilege of illegal occupation and tolerance from local authorities versus the eviction events".

around 'undifferentiation' and find themselves reluctant to identify and legitimise the existence of different socio-economic groups at the level of the community. Power structures and arenas of cooperation or conflict between actors are revealed in this section through the existence of higher and lower social status groups rather than socio-economic groups, social status being associated with the values given to the type of activity carried out by dwellers.

Analysis of socio-demographic and economic conditions: Methodology for triangulation

The socio-economic conditions of the Thapathali squatters are presented below using primary data collected as part of the household survey. The quantitative analysis of household level data has been triangulated using statistics from the National Population and Housing Census 2011 (NPHC 2011). The data collection for the census took place over five years from 2008/09 to 2012/13 and was conducted by the Nepalese Central Bureau of Statistics. The socio-economic profiles of Thapathali households are benchmarked against statistics at both national and capital city level, further disaggregated between rural and urban areas, in order to account for the demographic characteristics of the migrant population coming from various other rural and urban areas in Nepal. Tables can be found in **Annex E**.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the Thapathali population

Descriptive statistics at the level of the Thapathali population (based on surveyed sample) show that women are underrepresented in the Thapathali settlement, which can be attributed to the fact that internal migration from rural areas is mostly male-driven and that women (wives and girl children) are more likely to remain in the villages. The transitory function of urban squatting areas is revealed by the age structure of the Thapathali population: most individuals settle in their young age in order to make a living before hopefully being able to move to wealthier areas in the city as they establish their family. This pattern can also be explained by the recent history of the settlement, which makes the population structure biased towards younger households (young age of the households who marched over Thapathali following a political demonstration).

Thapathali settlement sex ratio: More men than women

One of the variables of interest relates to gender, as the sex ratio observed within the Thapathali community (50.4% men; 49.6% women; 100.1 males per 100 females) is inverted compared to the national average (refer to **Annex E**). While the national average shows a higher number of women compared to men (94.2 males per 100 females in 2011), the Thapathali settlement sex ratio demonstrates that women are underrepresented in urban squatting communities. The preponderance of males in the sex ratio for urban areas has been found a common pattern across urban studies in developing countries, as age and sex selectivity in migration decisions tends to favour an over representation of men in urban squatters communities. In the case of Kathmandu City, the relatively balanced ratio of males per 100 females can be further explained by Nepal-specific dynamics of out-migration of the male population in army services or construction work outside the country, enhancing additional revenue from remittances and resulting in a significantly higher number of women living in the capital city compared to other developing countries' urban areas.

Another interesting aspect of the Thapathali community is linked to the household structure. The Thapathali community reflects a rural type of household structure, with larger households than normally found in urban areas. The 'additional' household members are mainly sons and daughters, along with spouses of children who happen to live with their family/ family in law due to lack of affordable housing in the case of slum settlements such as Thapathali.

Thapathali population age structure: A young population

Age groups within the Thapathali community tend to reflect the national age structure, with a higher prevalence of 26-45 year olds and a lower percentage of 45+ (refer to **Annex E**). Fairly close to the urban areas/Kathmandu age group structure, the Thapathali settlement illustrates the fact that working age groups are overrepresented in urban areas where employment opportunities are more numerous and easier to access. 65+ are fewer compared to the national average, which shows the transitory function of urban squatting areas where individuals settle in their young age in order to make a living before hopefully being able to move to wealthier areas in the city. This pattern can also be explained by the recent history of the settlement, which makes the population structure biased towards younger households who marched over Thapathali following a political demonstration.

Household size and structure: Rural aspects

Household size and household structure present informative patterns with regards to households' organisational structure in Thapathali. While the average household size in the Thapathali community averages 5 household members¹⁰⁶, the national average of 4.9 and Kathmandu's average household size of 4.0 demonstrate that urban areas usually have a higher prevalence of smaller sized households compared to rural areas (5.1). The Thapathali community therefore reflects a rural type of household structure, with larger households – the 'additional' household members being mainly sons and daughters, along with spouses of children who happen to live with their family/ family in law due to lack of affordable housing. Single-headed households are few in the community and are female-headed households in most cases.

As shown on **Figure 5.4**, a significant number of households migrating from Eastern regions can be found in the Thapathali settlement, as a result of better transport infrastructures connecting these regions to the capital city compared to Western and Far Western regions. With respect to religion, a high prevalence of Christian households was found compared to national averages (refer to **Annex E**). This can be explained by the presence of Christian NGO support in the community, which entailed a significant number of conversions within the Thapathali population in order to receive scholarships and other types of financial support¹⁰⁷. Ethnicity and caste groups present patterns of heterogeneity; Magar, Tamang and Rai are over-represented compared to national statistics as a result of internal migration (as they are more mobile population groups coming from outside the Kathmandu Valley), and lower caste groups (Dalit, Lama) are found to be more prevalent in the squatting areas compared to higher caste groups (Brahmin), in comparison to the national distribution (refer to **Annex E**).

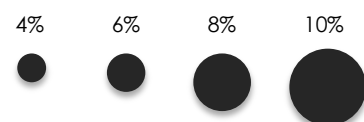
¹⁰⁶ This is an unusually low density for squatter settlements compared to other developing countries. Refer to discussion in Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁷ This finding is further discussed in Chapter 6.

Figure 5.4 Thapathali's household origins within Nepal



Percentage of total households, in Thapathali community, who migrated from highlighted locations



Source: Adapted from U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (2011);
accessed from <http://www.geographicguide.com>

Religion, ethnicity and caste in Thapathali¹⁰⁸

Regarding religion, ethnicity and caste, the Thapathali settlement has a diversified population with 58.1% Hindus, 23.7% Christians and 18.2% Buddhists. Compared to national averages, Hinduism is underrepresented (compared to 81.3% of Nepal total population), while Christianity (compared to 1.4%) and Buddhism (compared to 9.0%) are more prevalent in Thapathali compared to the rest of the country. Muslim groups are not present in the community (compared to 4.4% of Nepal total population). The high prevalence of Christians can be explained by the presence of Christian NGO support in the community, which entailed a significant number of conversions within the Thapathali population in order to receive scholarships and other types of financial support. Ethnicity and caste groups present patterns of heterogeneity, with a high prevalence of Chhetri (30.9% in Thapathali), Hill/Mountain Janajati (22.0% in Thapathali), Dalit (15.3% in Thapathali), Newar (11.4% in Thapathali), Lama (9.3% in Thapathali), Brahmin (6.8% in Thapathali) and Terai Janajati (4.2% in Thapathali). Compared to national figures, Chhetri is the largest caste/ethnic group with 16.6% of the total population followed by Brahmin (12.2% of Nepal total population), Magar (7.1% of Nepal total population; 15.7% in Thapathali), Tharu (6.6% of Nepal total population), Tamang (5.8% of Nepal total population; 8.9% in Thapathali), Newar (5.0% of Nepal total population), Kami (4.8% of Nepal total population), Musulman (4.4% of Nepal total population), Yadav (4.0% of Nepal total population; 2.1% in Thapathali) and Rai (2.3% of Nepal total population; 8.5% in Thapathali). The overrepresentation of Newars in Thapathali is explained by the fact Newar are the largest ethnic group in the Kathmandu Valley, therefore less prevalent in national averages. Magar, Tamang and Rai are over-represented as well as a result of internal migration (mobile population groups), and lower caste groups (Dalit, Lama) are found to be more prevalent in the squatting areas compared to higher caste groups (Brahmin).

Education levels below national averages in Thapathali

Education levels in the Thapathali area compare poorly with national literacy rates, as overall literacy rate for Nepal reached 65.9% in 2011. The highest literacy rate is reported in Kathmandu (86.3%) while the Thapathali community shows that 3.8% of the squatters are illiterate (cannot read nor sign their name), and 26.3% never attended school. The proportion of slum dwellers who reach secondary schooling is below national averages, although a non-negligible number of squatters hold university degrees (7.2%) demonstrating significant differences in educational levels within the community itself.

Migrant households' origin: High prevalence of migrants coming from Nepal Eastern regions

Migration patterns observed among the squatting population highlight common patterns of rural-urban migration, with most households having migrated from rural parts of Nepal to Kathmandu City. A higher prevalence of households migrating from Eastern regions can be found in the Thapathali settlement, as a result of better transport infrastructures connecting these regions to the capital city compared to Western and Far Western regions. The national distribution of migrant populations by origin of migration presents similar patterns, with 73.5% of those living in urban areas having migrated

¹⁰⁸ Nepal is a secular state. Prior to the movement for democracy in 2006, the country was officially a Hindu state. In Nepal, religion is more complex than a set of beliefs and rituals; religion is anchored in traditions, festivals, faiths and doctrines that permeate every socio-economic group of the Nepalese society. The interweaving of Hinduism, Buddhism and other beliefs in Nepal is often described as an example of religious tolerance and harmony. For a detailed discussion of religious aspects in Thapathali's everyday life, refer to Chapters 5 and 6.

from rural areas and 10.6% having migrated from outside Nepal (mostly India and China). Foreign migrants in the Thapathali community are fewer, although figures tend to be unreliable due to the reluctance to claim foreign migration entailed by legal documentation issues and stigma from local populations.

Poverty profiles and living conditions: Discrepancies between households within Thapathali

A closer analysis of income distribution at the level of the Thapathali population (based on surveyed sample) reveals significant differences within the Thapathali community (**Figure 5.5**). With an average monthly income per capita (OECD-modified scale adjusted¹⁰⁹) of 3763 NPR, 34 households out of a total of 50 households in the Thapathali settlement (68% of total sample) fall below the international poverty line of 1.25 USD a day (3720 NPR per month). Poorest household members live with 535 NPR a month, and are 17 times poorer than the second richest household (9200 NPR a month). With an average monthly income of 20000 NPR, the richest household is well above the poverty line and consists in a one-person household involved in retailing activities.

In general, the physical assets possessed by Thapathali households are a source of differentiation between agents, with 90% of households owning a mobile phone but only 38% owning a bicycle. 98% of households do not own any land in the rural areas they migrated from (10% of the 50 households lost their land due to landslide and other environmental disasters); while 26% report that their extended family owns land in the villages that themselves do not have access to. Based on these figures, it appears that the vast majority of households are landless (sukumbasi) and not 'fake' landless (hukumbasi)¹¹⁰, although the fact this status was self-reported by households invites to interpret this finding with caution.

National income distribution by quintiles: Situating Thapathali households

The income distribution structure of the Thapathali slum settlement further illustrates the heterogeneity in available income among the different households. Using national averages by quintile, 76% of Thapathali households fall in the first, second or third national quintiles – quintiles (first, second and third) which represent a cumulative share of only 24.1% of total national income. While some households fall far below the second national quintile, a significant share of households in Thapathali (10%) have a monthly income per capita within the fifth national quintile, which further illustrates the wide discrepancies in available income within the Thapathali community. Detailed tables can be found in **Annex E**.

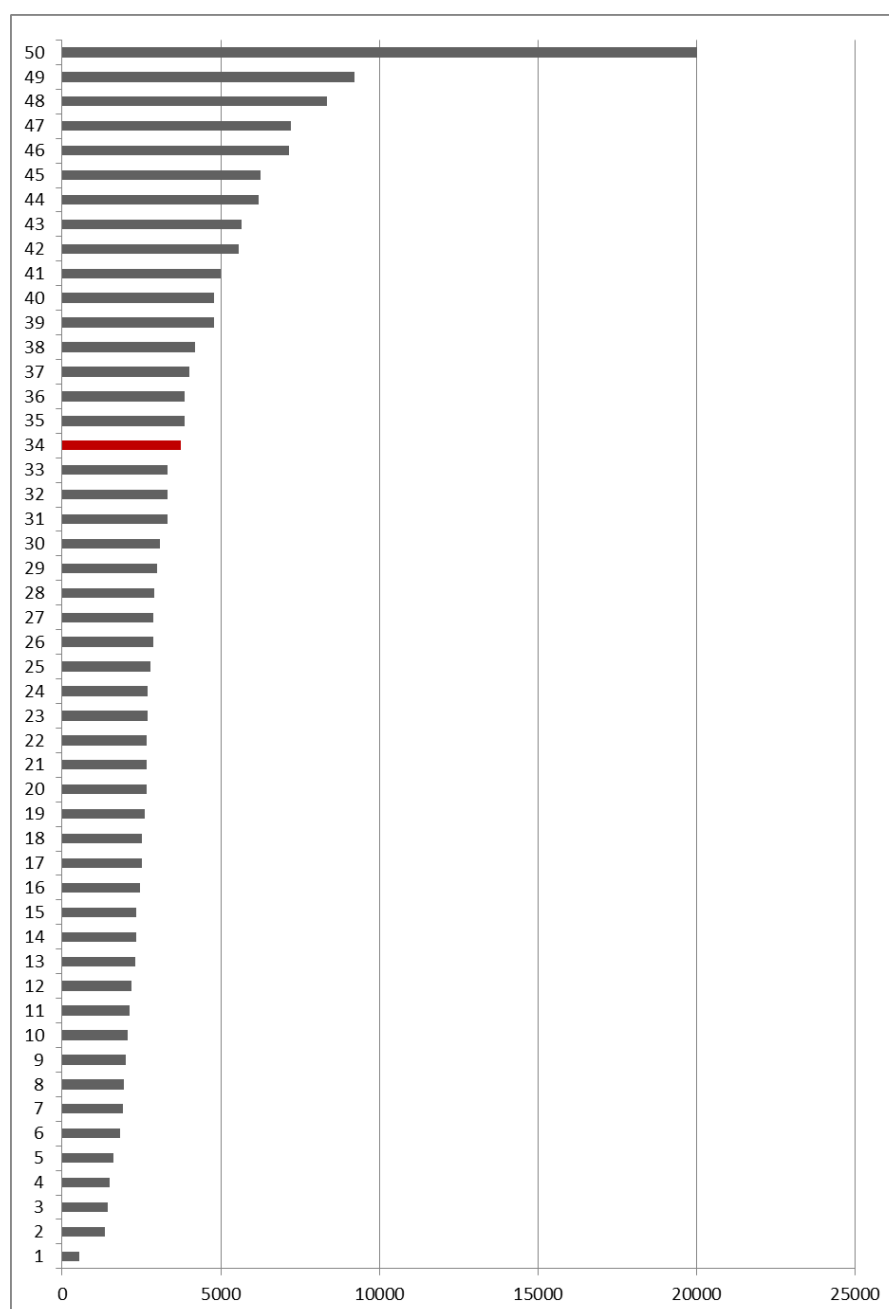
Based on the household survey data, income variations can be further explained by socio-economic statistics compiled at the level of the Thapathali community, showing differences in poverty by household size, religion, ethnicity, caste, employment status, ratio of household earning members, frequency of hardship, coping strategies and rural-urban connections. The average monthly income per capita increases with household size until a threshold of 4 household members (4340 NPR), after which larger households (4+) tend to be poorer (2450 NPR). Hindu households are poorer on average (3305 NPR) in comparison to Christian (3411 NPR) and Buddhist

¹⁰⁹ Refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed account of the methodological approach.

¹¹⁰ Refer to Chapter 4 for a discussion on land ownership in Nepal and the definitions of hukumbasi and sukumbasi.

households (5691 NPR), which suggests that different groups of slum dwellers (identified here by religious affiliation) access different types of livelihoods and/or benefit from better living standards, possibly through external support. Regarding caste/ethnic groups, Chhetri, Hill/Mountain Janajati, Dalit and Lama tend to be well-off compared to Terai Janajati and Newar, although differences are not significant, showing the limited influence of caste hierarchy on poverty status. This finding appears to support the absence of discriminative practices based on caste status, in the specific case of income distribution.

Figure 5.5 Income distribution in Thapathali (ranking of all households surveyed, by monthly income in NPR)¹¹¹



¹¹¹ Each number refers to a sampled household in the Thapathali community (50 households in total). The red line indicates that 34 households in the Thapathali settlement out of a total of 50 households (68% of total sample) fall below the international poverty line of 1.25 USD a day (3720 NPR per month).

Self-employed households are better off than other households

Employment status is a predicator of income differences between households in Thapathali, as the self-employed's available income consistently exceed the casual and regular wage workers in terms of available income (**Figure 5.6**). Casual or daily wage workers are slightly better-off compared to regular wage workers who earn an average of 3497 NPR per month, with variations within the group. Self-employment stands out as a livelihood strategy with higher earnings.

Figure 5.6 Average monthly per capita income by employment status (in NPR)



Exploring the differences in income across households by investigating the first occupation of household head at the time of migration to Kathmandu (self-reported indicator) shows that helpers in family businesses or domestic workers have higher chances to be well-off at the time of the survey compared to construction and factory workers, or individuals engaged in street vending activities (**Figure 5.7**). This pattern may be explained by the availability of family connections at the time of migration, easing the access to work opportunities in already-settled family businesses or facilitating domestic work through recommendations to wealthier families for whom to work as a domestic worker. Migrants with limited or non-existent information about the urban labour market were more likely to engage in construction/factory work or street vending activities, as these earning strategies do not require any form of social capital nor family recommendation.

Figure 5.7 Average monthly per capita income at the time of survey, by household head's first occupation at time of migration (in NPR)

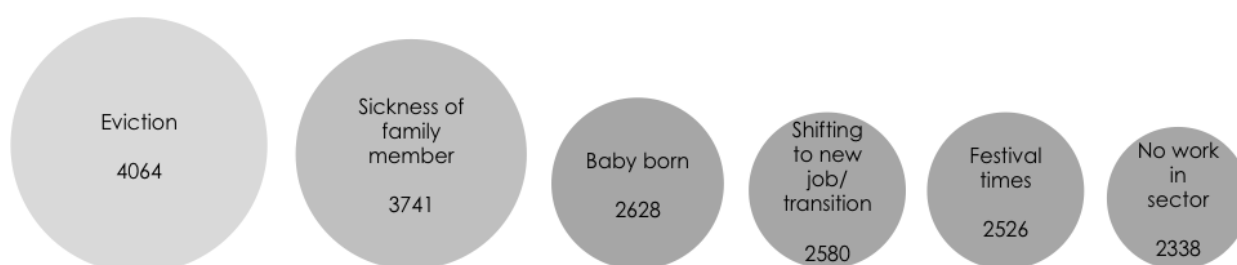


Households with only one earning member earn less on average; poorer households experience hardship periods more frequently

The household structure and distribution of earning members versus non-working members or members below working age is another determinant of differences in income levels. On average, households where the ratio of earning members to non-earning members is low (0.25)

have lower income levels (2409 NPR) compared to households with several working members and less dependents (0.75; 5594 NPR). Unsurprisingly, households declaring that their aggregate earnings are enough to support all family members tend to earn more on average compared to households reporting that they experience several hardship periods during the year. Reasons mentioned for the last period of hardship experienced by households fall into various categories, from expenses dedicated to festivals, expenses faced when a new baby is born, to expenses entailed by the eviction and the resulting loss of assets. Wealthier households are more likely to experience hardship as a result of eviction or sickness of a family member (**Figure 5.8**), which illustrates the unpredictable aspect of the expenses induced by these two types of event. Poorer households are more widely affected by other types of unexpected expenses (no work in sector, shifting to a new job, festival times, new family member born), as their capacity to rely on 'buffer' savings is less compared to richer households.

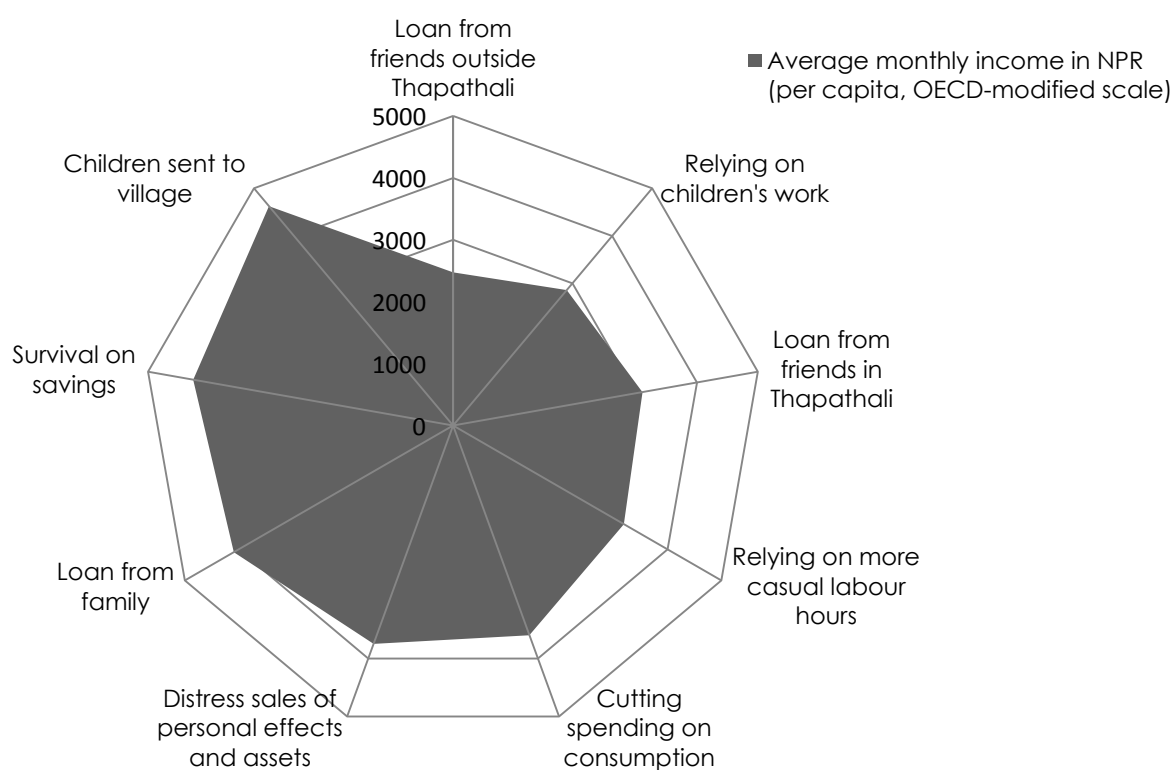
Figure 5.8 Reason for last hardship period, ranked by average monthly per capita income (in NPR)



Coping strategies of richer and poorer households

Coping strategies are fairly different from one household to another, based on income differences. On average, wealthier households tend to survive on savings, take a loan from their family or send their dependents to their extended family who stayed in the villages, demonstrating the important role of the family support network for richer households. Poorer households have to resort to relying on more casual labour hours, on children's work or taking a loan from friends (**Figure 5.9**).

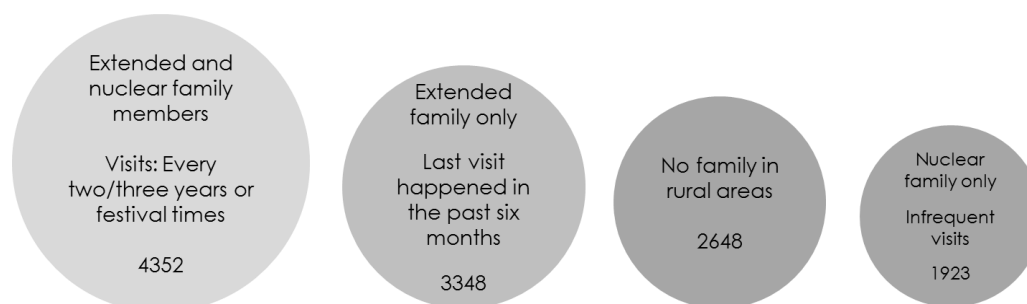
Figure 5.9 Type of coping strategy, ranked by average monthly per capita income (in NPR)



Rural-urban linkages and family support: Lesser influence of nuclear family members compared to extended family members

The rural-urban support network is therefore a crucial aspect when explaining income differences among slum dwellers in the Thapathali area. Whether households have family remaining in the rural areas (both extended and nuclear family members) predicts higher income levels of slum dwellers (**Figure 5.10**), as having access to support or information from family living in the rural areas makes a crucial difference to households' capacity to make a living in Kathmandu. Those having no family or only nuclear family members staying in the villages tend not to benefit from an extended rural-urban type of support, showing the lesser influence of nuclear family members compared to extended family members, and alternatively the strength of weaker and more diffuse family linkages when it comes to relying on external support for making a living. This can be explained by the diversity of diffuse family linkages and extended family members (diverse socio-economic situations or employment situations), which tends to open different 'types of doors' to Thapathali households, as opposed to nuclear family members sharing similar living conditions.

Figure 5.10 Relationship to family living in rural areas, ranked by average monthly per capita income (in NPR)



Interestingly, households who tend to send money back home are poorer compared to households receiving financial support from their rural extended family (**Figure 5.11**), which demonstrates that poorer households, while not benefiting from financial help from their family, resort to sharing their earnings with other family members who stayed behind, whereby ensuring a rural safety net in case they are forced to move back to their villages (e.g. unexpected hardship). By contrast, wealthier households are receiving financial support and benefiting from higher initial endowments as part of a reproductive mechanism through which family wealth is transmitted to those attempting to make a living in the capital city, giving them higher chances of success compared to households who migrated to Kathmandu as a result of rural poverty.

Figure 5.11 Types of financial support, ranked by average monthly per capita income (in NPR)

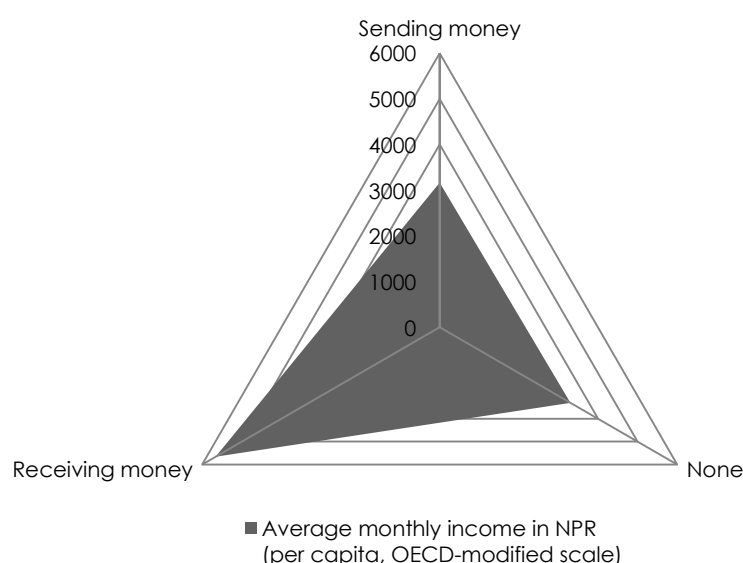
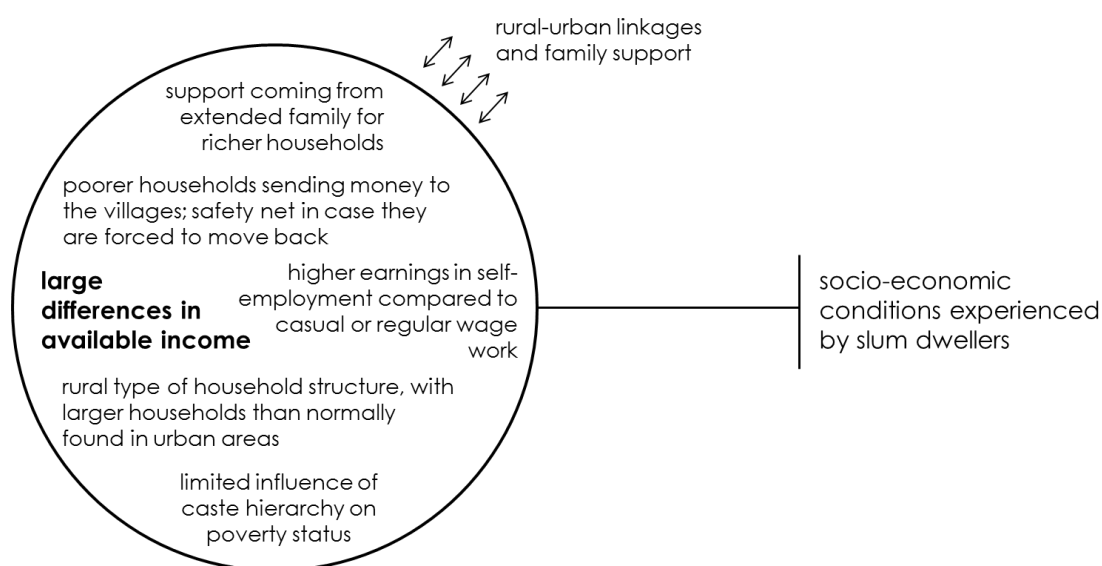


Figure 5.12 Socio-economic conditions experienced by slum dwellers



Using qualitative interviews conducted with slum dwellers, further insights are given to the socio-economic conditions documented as part of the quantitative analysis of the household survey. Aspects of the inner-slum class structure are essential in order to reveal the power structures and arenas of cooperation and conflict between actors while demonstrating the existence of income and social status differences at the level of the Thapathali slum area. Conflicting and cooperating actors, or higher and lower social status groups, are not permanently defined groups, or groups in which the roles of agents are maintained irrespectively of the issue under consideration. According to De Haan (2000: 352), *"they are rather groups of differing composition, which present themselves depending on the problem. Sometimes it is an occupational group, sometimes it is a status group like women or youths, sometimes it is a kinship group, sometimes a network of mutual assistance or clients of a patron, and sometimes a group of individuals with a common historical trajectory of livelihood strategies"*. Different interests and income structures coexist between these groups, while power struggles are often taking place in both local (community level) and extra-local (urban or national levels) decision arenas. Depending on social representations and objective living conditions, squatters belong to various groups, and drawing the line between these interest groups is an exercise with variable results – in a community of urban squatters, inclusion and exclusion from groups differs according to various dimensions.

Representations associated with living conditions and occupational status

A primary observation lies in the fact that beyond observed differences in income levels and living conditions, there are similarities and homogeneity within the community of urban squatters relating to social representations associated with living conditions and occupational status. Most dwellers perceive their occupations as being very similar to one another, and have the feeling of sharing a homogenous status at the level of the community, apparently invalidating the hypothesis of having power structures at the community level. Alternatively, it is important to note that higher and lower social status groups, according to De Haan (2000), are not

permanently defined groups, or groups in which the roles of agents are maintained irrespectively of the issue under consideration. As such, the social representations associated with living conditions and occupational status are expressed by 'members' of higher and lower social status groups using a *common narrative*, as a conscious or unconscious strategy to preserve the homogeneity within the community¹¹²:

Here in Thapathali, most people are busy with their own work, they don't judge you for what you do. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

Being a street vendor is fine, it is a common job here, many people do it. It is difficult and physical because you have to carry a lot around and you have no fixed place of work. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

In Thapathali, most people do the same jobs. (...) Most people are working in the construction sector. So it is seen as a good job by everyone. People find that this job fits them. (head, female, 30, sewing factory worker)

Representations associated with poverty

By contrast with observed differences in income levels and living conditions (refer to **Figure 5.5**), representations associated with poverty status follow a similar pattern – slum dwellers have the feeling they share similar poverty conditions at the level of the community, which demonstrates that the linkages between objective conditions of living, income levels and the social representation of poverty are weak. Income differences do not appear to have an influence on how households perceive their poverty, and poverty is socially-constructed around one single and shared narrative: poverty equates with living in a squatting community, experiencing informal housing and living at the edge of the urban fabric, regardless of the income differences measured across households.

There is no social class, everyone is as equally poor. People are helping each other, they speak up. (head, male, 42, unskilled construction worker)

There is no class structure. Everyone is the same here, there are no differences in earnings. (head, male, 38, meat shop owner)

Representations associated with the social status relating to the way of making a living

Social structures are more easily observed through representations associated with the type of activities carried out by slum dwellers, and tend to differentiate groups of slum dwellers based on the social status assigned to their ways of making a living. By contrast with the above statements related to the similarities and homogeneity within the community of urban squatters in terms of the social representations associated with living conditions and occupational status, low social status is for instance associated to construction work, perceived as a physically demanding occupation squatters have to resort to in the absence of better alternatives in order to survive. Activities such as handicraft or small productions run from home suffer similar stigma as they rely on having to resort to manual work rather than intellectual work. When asked about the social

¹¹² Refer below to sub-section *Social representations in Thapathali: A temporary and symbolic balance* for a detailed discussion of the absence of acknowledged socio-economic differences and the existence of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 1893).

status associated with a certain activity, slum dwellers become more specific about the different beliefs held by groups in the community as to which type of work is perceived as 'good' or 'bad':

Construction work is not so good for social status. But it is good enough to support the family. My husband is getting sick from it, he has issues with his hands and fingertips. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

When I run out of money, there is no other choice than relying on more hours of work, more casual labour as construction worker. (head, female, 65, unskilled construction worker)

Work is important if you want to feed your family, and doing manual work is hard. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

Accommodating different social representations and maintaining a sense of homogeneity

Social groups are therefore formed around the ways slum dwellers are perceived within their own community – around 'what people think of you' in relation to one's livelihood strategies and positive/negative values attached to them. Important values revolve around cooperation, sharing the benefits of one's way of making a living and maintaining a sense of homogeneity through limiting the effects of jealousy or dependency associated with higher levels of income.

People think you are successful if you do cooperative, team work. (head, male, 37, unskilled construction worker)

Community spirit is good, when people get sick they collect money. But it is difficult to have a good coordination between everyone. (spouse, female, 28, unskilled construction worker)

Some people are richer and it creates desires about things I don't have and that they have. And then you feel dependent on richer people because they can assist you. (head, male, 38, meat shop owner)

The level of dependency between each social group is a defining feature of the socio-economic boundaries felt and experienced between slum dwellers. While cooperation and help are perceived as non-negotiable aspects of sharing identical squatting living conditions, entailing a degree of undifferentiation between slum dwellers and the reluctance to identify and legitimise the existence of different socio-economic groups at the level of the community, dependency upon more well-off households is seen as a dividing feature which should be avoided at all cost and is reflected in the social representations and norms slum dwellers agree upon. An illustration of these type of norms is given by the fact slum dwellers refuse to acknowledge success as being driven by financial wealth, and tend to focus on different value judgments when assessing one's social situation, such as *being a good person, being accepted within the community, being judged as 'good' poor people by other urban social classes or not suffering from discrimination*.

The reasons why we see people as successful is different for each person. Some quite rich people still suffer from discrimination. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

The community spirit is ok, but there are some drinking issues. Conflicts between husband and wife because of alcohol. I think it gives bad impressions of slum dwellers, people think we are all drinkers. (head, female, 40, handicraft work from home)

(...) If funds are provided by NGOs or the government, the rich usually get it first. They are successful but they are not always good people. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

The existence of female groups of interest is another aspect of differentiation between groups of slum dwellers being kept to a minimal level in order to ensure homogeneity in living conditions and daily life acceptance of everyone in the community. The limited social stigma associated with women's work is fairly restricted to poor communities – compared to other urban upper social classes – which are forced to rely on women's earnings in order to make a proper living and survive. The poverty of squatters is reflected in the higher participation of both men and women in economic activities in order to increase levels of income. Women bypass the social taboo of living indoors and participate in income-generating activities both within and outside the spaces of home and the Thapathali settlement – which results in an unusual set of social norms relating to the acceptability of women's work, shared by the community more due to income constraints rather than normative easing of social rules towards women's right to work.

Groups of differing composition, which present themselves depending on the issue raised, therefore make up the social and normative fabric of the Thapathali slum settlement, as for instance women groups have been formed as a result of the easing of social rules usually faced by women. While these groups may not strongly influence the everyday interactions between men and women within the community, they tend to make their voices heard at different points in time when belonging to such groups becomes of interest.

I used to feel bad for being a woman and not being educated. But then I joined a women forum, two years ago, here in Thapathali. We as a group of women got information about women rights. (...) Before I was only engaged in household duties, domestic work. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

Group characteristics are also shaped by representations relating to rural ways of making decisions, whereby rurality ("a condition of place-based homeliness shared by people with common ancestry or heritage and who inhabit traditional, culturally defined areas or places statutorily recognised to be rural" (Chigbu 2013: 815)) and associated ways of presenting oneself to others tend to be less favoured in comparison to urban skillsets and urban knowledge of how to make a living in the capital city among rural migrants. Adaptability to the urban social environment and knowledge of urban codes tend to separate former migrant workers from recent ones, demonstrating a certain degree of social stigma towards those who know less about urban labour markets and how to get a position within the urban 'system'.

Social networking is more and more important. They only hire the known ones. Skilful people are doing good. It is more difficult with rural skills. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

Representations associated with technical, social and networking skills

Social representations associated with skillsets – understood here in a broad sense ranging from presentational, social and networking skills to more 'hard' skills such as technical and manual skills – are an important determinant of differing group composition within the community. By giving value to *doing what one knows how to do*, slum dwellers build their social representations around a shared acknowledgment of being worth what one is doing for a living, entailing a

differentiation between groups of individuals with manual skills, individuals with soft skills, individuals with selling skills, or individuals with networking skills. Nevertheless, beyond the apparent distinction between slum dwellers according to their different skillsets, the common view remains that individuals should *do what they are good at* and value is recognised in strategies whereby slum dwellers maintain their social status by being able to feed their family while earning their livings in valuable ways such as hard physical work, managing a shop or running household expenses in a sensible way.

Usually people think what you do is fine as long as it is something you can do, that you have the required skills. (head, male, 46, security guard)

Working in a meat shop is not exactly considered as a good occupation. It is just for sustaining the family. My husband is doing this job because he knows how to do it. That's what he knows how to do. (...) People from Thapathali order meat from us for festival times, we do not feel bad for doing this job. (spouse, female, 37, meat shop helper)

Electricity skills are good as well. Or sewing and handicraft. When the only thing you can do is using your hands, this is good. (head, male, 42, unskilled construction worker)

Group differentiation is therefore minimal in terms of the representations slum dwellers convey of themselves and their occupational status, although differences exist between the social representations associated with slum dwellers speaking as 'us' and slum dwellers referring to their own household. Differences related to income levels are also felt in some parts of the community, as tensions are being reported about families earning more money than others. A common narrative is for slum dwellers to focus on the provenance of higher financial statuses within the community, and the perception of what defines a successful household changes as the community tries to maintain the impression of a steadily shared poverty status. Singling out households making a living in *non-honourable or non-simple* ways (illegality (mostly related to drugs, or retail of other illegal goods), informal work, 'demeaning' occupations such as prostitution) is for instance used as a coping strategy to limit the feelings of jealousy and class structure within the community.

Sometimes people get jealous about what I'm doing, because our family earns more money compared to other families. There are differences, and tensions. (head, female, 35, tea shop owner)

Most people earning more money than others are usually engaged in illegal activities though, or corruption. So these are not the most successful. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

Everyone in this slum is similar, good clothing and good food is enough to live a simple and happy life. Earning big money doesn't make you successful, you can live in a small house and be spiritually successful. People who are rich do not have the peace of mind that working people have. (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)

Social representations in Thapathali: A temporary and symbolic balance

Being part of the Thapathali community entails abiding by a certain set of norms relating to the community characteristics, the idea being that sharing common poverty patterns or being similarly poor as everyone else results in higher acceptance of each individual member of the community while maintaining a sense of belonging through homogeneity in living conditions.

Reproductive behaviours and imitative strategies are therefore valued as part of the Thapathali community and form the mind-set of a sustainable community. By replicating traditional rural structures of support and undifferentiation, translated from the village structure to the urban community structure, Thapathali slum dwellers – both consciously and unconsciously – recreate a space within which they find a temporary and symbolic balance between being integrated to the competitive urban economic and labour markets and being the direct beneficiaries of a smaller-scale community of support. While slum dwellers may not have a detailed understanding of each other's personal circumstances or family history compared to village-level social dynamics, they share in common the experience of attempting to make a living in the capital city.

Community is quite helpful. If someone gets sick, they collect money. Compared to villages, it is different here. Here people struggle more, they got through more painful experiences so that they understand each other's life and help. (head, male, 38, meat shop owner)

There is a cooperative spirit. People help each other, as far as they can. There are no difference or social classes. Everyone is the same. (head, male, 28, mechanics)

There is a good community spirit all in all, but some people are less cooperative than others. I can't really explain what it is, you have to live it, experience it to understand it. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

The maintenance of a supportive and cohesive community spirit is crucial to Thapathali slum dwellers, who attempt to find their place within a group of individuals who share in common lifetime migration experiences and remains of rural traditions relating to festivals and religious celebrations. Externally defined norms and beliefs such as religious or ethnic traditions are valued more than in other urban groups, as they symbolise one's capacity to maintain its rank by being able to celebrate such social events in spite of difficult and adverse living conditions. Social expenses are crucial for squatter households, although they represent further constraints and pressure on already tight household expenses. The importance of celebrating such events however fulfils a double function of showing one's ability to follow religious traditions ('having to' buy new clothes for social status purposes) while enhancing a cohesive spirit within the community through the shared celebration of social events.

But what we earn is not enough. During festival times, 4 to 5 months ago, we ran out of money. We had to buy clothes, and then we had to do with what we had. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

We don't earn enough money but we have to manage. When we run out of money, like during festival times, we get small donations from my family. (spouse, female, 58, unskilled construction worker)

Periods of hardship are around festival times. Last time was 6 months ago. We had to buy new clothes. (spouse, female, 40, unskilled construction worker)

While the ability to maintain one's social status within the community appears to be more important than the observed differences in income levels, shaping differences among slum dwellers around their social position rather than their absolute poverty level, the support function

of the community is revealed as a symbolic one rather than an actual working safety net function. Asking for help and support is perceived as a last resort strategy that slum dwellers should not resort to unless their social status allows them to do so or their periods of hardship leave them with no other choice but to put their social pride aside. Bringing private financial hardship situations to the public community sphere is more taboo than expected at the level of a community built around a 'homogeneity narrative'. Requests for help and support are relatively specific and mostly concern small matters or unexpected important expenses related to sickness or social expenses (wedding, funeral). The window of opportunity for asking for support is limited and the community is perceived by slum dwellers as a support system that should not be used for any type of financial hardship.

People in this community help you with small matters. Like sickness, funeral expenses, complication in pregnancy. (spouse, female, 58, unskilled construction worker)

If someone gets sick in this community, people raise money and help. But I don't want to ask, I don't want to be seen as a burden. (head, female, 65, unskilled construction worker)

I don't really understand how others feel, so it's difficult to know when others really need to be helped. (head, male, 33, skilled construction worker)

We are doing ok with household expenses. We manage but we cannot save money. (...) We are proud because we never took debt from someone. If we really needed help, we would ask our friends in Thapathali. (head, male, 60, mechanics)

The primary unit for support therefore tends to remain the household, the community coming afterwards as another layer of support. The social structure of the Thapathali settlement is articulated not only around individuals and groups of interest, as the household level tends to regulate and articulate the social order within which inner-slum social classes are being observed. As a result, the community level of support remains mainly a symbolic and mental safety net¹¹³, whereby slum dwellers ensure their survival more through the reassuring representation of potential community support rather than through an actual community support system.

The community spirit is not really good, people don't know each other because they work for long hours outside of Thapathali. Then they don't help each other because they don't know each other. (head, male, 34, skilled construction worker)

The community cannot really help you. They try to collect money, but you can't really do much with only 1000 NPR. (head, female, 53, unskilled construction worker)

Household-level support strategies are reflected in the inner organisation of household and how each member contributes to facing periods of hardship through involvement in household chores or other household tasks for instance. The household is therefore a 'buffer zone' between the individual and the community and serves the function of giving each individual a function within a specific social order, social structures being the community, different groups of interests or the household.

¹¹³ As evidenced by the social representations associated with living conditions and occupational status expressed by 'members' of higher and lower social status groups using a common narrative, as a conscious or unconscious strategy to preserve the homogeneity within the community. Refer to sub-section *Representations associated with living conditions and occupational status*.

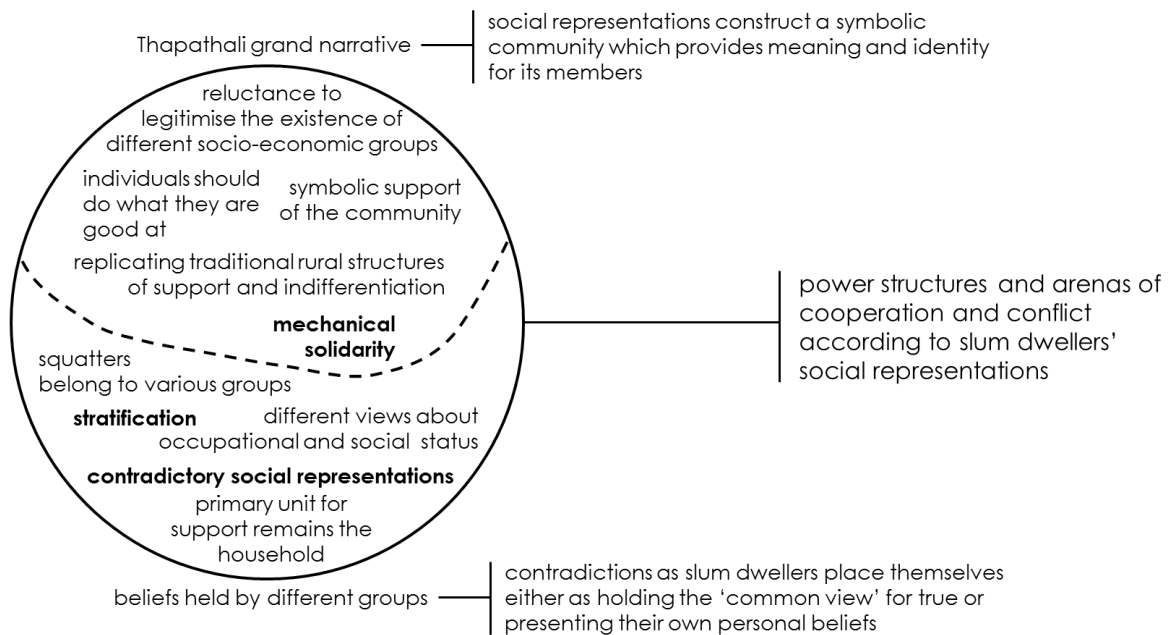
My wife cannot work, since she suffers from a heart disease. It has been seven years now, but she still does the domestic chores. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

In conclusion, a precarious balance is found in the inner-slum social structure (**Figure 5.13**). Socio-economic conditions differ considerably from one household to another, while similarities and differences experienced by slum dwellers are hidden behind a common narrative at the level of the community, whereby slum dwellers build their own social representations of the community social structures around undifferentiation and find themselves reluctant to identify and legitimise the existence of different socio-economic groups at the level of the community. Nonetheless, as delimited by the dotted line in **Figure 5.13**, power structures and arenas of cooperation or conflict between actors are present and revealed through the existence of higher and lower social status groups rather than socio-economic groups, social status being associated with the values given to the type of activity carried out by dwellers: the social structures and differences between lower and higher socio-economic groups are more easily observed through representations associated with *being successful* or *doing what one is good at*. As such, 'community homogeneity' and 'community heterogeneity' discourses manage to coexist within the Thapathali community, demonstrating the existence of a tension between presenting oneself as similar to others, yet as belonging to different levels of the social structure within the community.

Following W.I. Thomas' observations that if individuals believe a phenomenon to be real, then it is real in its consequences for them, the reality of the 'community spirit' can be found in the social representations slum dwellers build for themselves and for their community (the 'Thapathali grand narrative'). As long as slum dwellers abide by this grand narrative, the symbolic homogeneity and solidarity within the community is maintained. Forming the mind-set of the community, social representations construct a symbolic community which provides meaning and identity for its members (Cohen 1995), who find in the absence of acknowledged socio-economic differences and the existence of mechanical solidarity¹¹⁴ (Durkheim 1893) a way to maintain a sense of homogeneity at the level of the community – crucial to ensuring the symbolic balance between being integrated to the competitive urban economic and labour markets and benefiting from a smaller-scale community of support in which every other dweller is found experiencing living conditions (with different income levels) comparable to his/her neighbour.

¹¹⁴ A society founded upon likeness, unable to tolerate dissimilarity among its members. Durkheim introduced the terms 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity' as part of his theory of the development of societies in *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893).

Figure 5.13 The inner-slum class structure



Setting of the micro-level structures: A shared eviction event

As shown in **Sections 5.1** and **5.2**, diverse social representations associated with the Thapathali slum settlement coexist with the meso-level dynamics of eviction in a fast growing city. The processes attached to arbitrating who is entitled to informal city spaces have crucial consequences for the micro-level structures of the community: the eviction events had disruptive consequences on the shared identity of the squatting community, as the absence of a community leader and the discourse around the betrayal from both the government and the slum dwellers who moved out of the community as a result of negotiations with the local authorities is now dominant among the squatting population who remained on the Thapathali land.

Nevertheless, the eviction can be observed as an identity-building event with the establishment of a grand narrative around the eviction events. Creating new forms of interactions and new ways of living together, the community found ways of coping with the destruction of their homes and engaged in self-help networks whereby households looked after one another's belongings. Consequences for the micro-level structures affecting the squatters' decision space are multiple, and the resulting social inertia and coping strategies put in place by local residents can be interpreted as new forms of shared strategies reinforcing the community mind-set. The inner social structures shaping the Thapathali community after the eviction events can be depicted as 'flattened' social structures, as most of the squatters were left with no brick house and partially destroyed productive assets (bicycles, sewing machine, provisions for tea shops, etc.). The state of continuous occupancy of the Thapathali land can be read as a sign of further imbrication within the wider logics of Kathmandu's urban social and economic fabric: by failing to evict the squatting populations, the position of the government is perceived as 'granting' a formal

existence to the area and its inhabitants, further relayed in the media's portrayal of the urban middle class' representations of the eviction events.

Delimitation of the micro-level structures: The slum area as a confined space

An important finding supporting the existence of micro-level structures within the Thapathali social group lies in the understanding of the workings of social representations within the Thapathali slum settlement and how these are being experienced as delimiting the physical and mental boundaries for the squatting population. The 'togetherness' of living is shaped by external pressures and interactions with the wider city fabric (urban labour and housing markets, local authorities, municipality and government's roles), which delimit the space of representations within which individuals form, assess and make their decisions.

Based on geographical factors, an area is considered as a spatial poverty trap when the majority of its inhabitants have difficulties sustaining their living mainly due the limited availability of local resources. In the specific case of the Thapathali slum area, a spatial poverty trap appears to exist not in terms of the differences in geographical endowment, access to infrastructure and markets – but encompasses another dimension of spatial urban poverty which lies in the nature of the “*power relationships that mediate access to employment opportunities, markets and services*” (Grant 2010: 1). The Thapathali settlement is a relevant example of the fact that beyond physical proximity and differentiated degrees of inclusion/ exclusion, the interactions and mechanisms that produce pockets of urban poverty in a city are not only geographical but socially built.

The inner slum class structure: Social status versus socio-economic status

Socio-economic conditions differ considerably from one household to another, while similarities and differences experienced by slum dwellers are hidden behind a common narrative at the level of the community, whereby slum dwellers build their own social representations of the community social structures around undifferentiation and find themselves reluctant to identify and legitimise the existence of different socio-economic groups at the level of the community. A precarious balance is found between similarities and differences experienced and expressed by slum dwellers, and power structures and arenas of cooperation or conflict between actors are present and revealed through the existence of higher and lower social status groups rather than socio-economic groups, social status being associated with the values given to the type of activity carried out by dwellers.

Complexities of the micro-level structures: The existence of sub-groups within the community

Squatters appear to belong to various groups depending on the problems they face, although group differentiation is found to be minimal, at least in the representations slum dwellers convey of themselves and their living conditions. The complexity of the social representations presented in this chapter is revealed through the existence of contradicting social representations (in relation to social status, meanings associated with occupational status, feelings of being all equally poor versus differences in representations about the 'rich' and the 'poor'), which suggests that social representations are not static nor consistent between each group of households. On the contrary, slum dwellers tend to become more specific over time about the different beliefs

held by groups in the community, whether they refer to the grand narrative at the level of the community or speak about their own household and personal views. These contradictions may also be explained by the strategies, conscious or unconscious, employed by agents as they interpret the questions asked by the researcher, and decide to place themselves either as holding the 'common view' for true or presenting their own personal beliefs in relation to the sub-groups they belong to.

5.3 The rural-urban nexus at the level of the Thapathali settlement: Role in defining a shared and constrained decisional space

While exploring living conditions, income levels, representations associated with social structures within the community and mental boundaries entailed by inhabiting a shared space gave an in-depth preliminary account of the decision space for making a living experienced by slum dwellers, another important aspect defining the Thapathali community mind-set and slum dwellers' social representations lies in the influence of the rural-urban nexus on shaping the social representations associated to living in a squatting community. Rural-urban connections are key to the understanding of how slum dwellers make their decisions about making a living, as these connections tend to be highly influential in the case of households having a close relationship with their extended families. By shaping the reasons for migration, inner-city migration patterns, types of first employment found by slum dwellers at the time of migration and subsequent visits and support from rural communities, the extended family and anchors in rural areas tend to shape the enclosed Thapathali living space and ways in which households engage with integrating their livelihood strategies into the wider city dynamics.

Reasons for migration, inner-city migration and pathways to living in Thapathali: A diverse picture

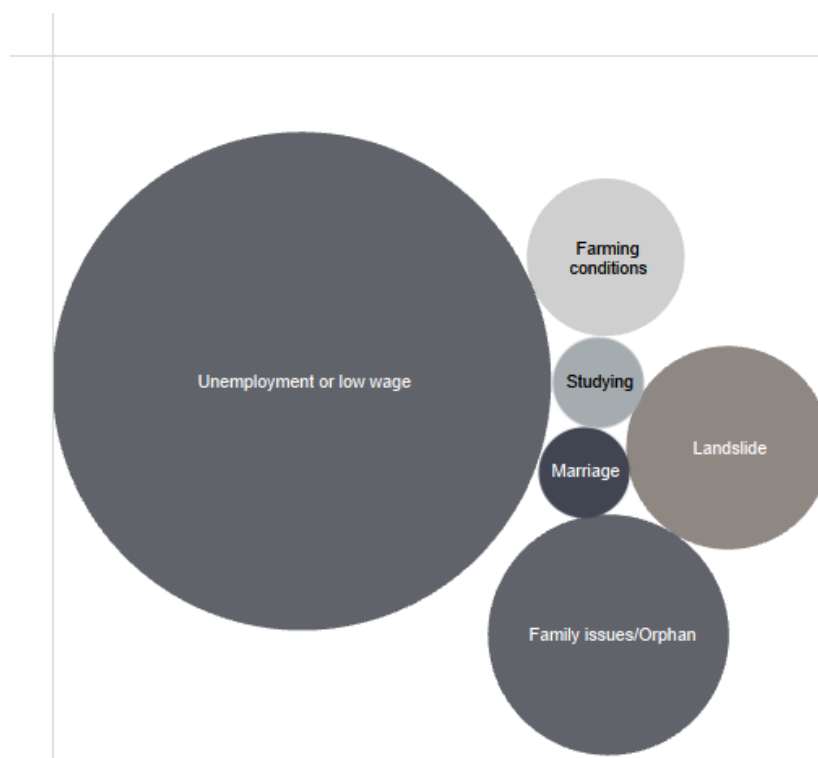
First observations relating to linkages existing between migrant households and rural communities show that migrants living in the Thapathali area are in the vast majority long-term migrants who came to settle in Kathmandu more than ten years ago (66% of sampled households). Among the Thapathali residents, over 75% of sampled households settled in the community six to eight years ago, following the demonstration during which a group of individuals decided to settle in the Thapathali area. The community total population has remained fairly stable since then, with only 10% of sampled households having moved to the area less than five years ago.

Lacking a proper understanding of the housing market and information about affordable housing alternatives, migrants tend to settle in rented rooms during their first years living in Kathmandu. Rent amounts on average to 1000 NPR to 2000 NPR per month, which represents a significant share of household's available income for a living space which usually does not exceed 20 square metres. The length of stay in rented rooms differs quite importantly from one household to another, with 40% of households having spent less than ten years in marketed housing before settling in squatting communities, while 48% of households lived in rented rooms for a total length of ten to twenty-five years before moving to Thapathali. This suggests that the

Thapathali population comes from various backgrounds and went through different pathways within Kathmandu before settling in the Thapathali community¹¹⁵.

Reasons for migration from the rural areas (**Figure 5.14**) mainly relate to unemployment and lack of work opportunities in the villages ('pull' factor). A second reason of importance for choosing to migrate to Kathmandu lies in family issues or family reasons ('push' factor), demonstrating the influence of personal family factors such as domestic violence, family disputes over land ownership or orphan situations on the likelihood to move away and settle in Kathmandu. Another type of push factor is associated with the environmental hazards faced by households who may have lost their land in the rural areas due to landslides. Farming conditions are reported as being harsh working conditions with low earnings, entailing a significant migration flow towards urban areas. Studying and marriage are mentioned as side reasons for migrating to the capital city, where the education system is perceived as more comprehensive and more likely to educate children with the appropriate set of skills for them to find employment in urban areas after completing their studies.

Figure 5.14 Reasons for migration (percentage of total households, Thapathali community)¹¹⁶



Inner-city migration patterns and households' pathways from rented rooms to squatting areas are mostly explained by the difficulty to pay rent and the opportunity to increase households' available income from saving on rent. Over 55% of households report the difficulty to pay rent as an explanation for moving to squatting areas, while 28% claim that their interest in moving to the Thapathali area was driven by having access to free land provided by the

¹¹⁵ Refer to 4.4 in Chapter 4 for a discussion about renting a cheap and affordable room versus settling in sub-standard settlements through family contacts or acquaintances.

¹¹⁶ Detailed figures (%) can be found in Annex E.

government, illustrating the ambiguity of available public information about the area at the time of settlement. A feeling that the government was providing land for free as a gesture towards low income groups was shared among settlers at that time, and resulted in a number of households leaving their rented rooms to grasp the opportunity to own plots of lands in the city centre on which they started to build small huts and semi-permanent dwellings. Ways in which households identified Thapathali as an alternative housing solution are therefore relatively informal, mostly by walking around the Thapathali area and spotting families settling on free land, followed by information shared by friends, colleagues or neighbours in rented rooms – who had heard about the Thapathali settlement. Families also encouraged other members from their extended kin to settle in Thapathali, restricting the access to the squatting area to a number of privileged households who found themselves in the settlement's window of opportunity.

Reasons for migration as presented in slum dwellers' discourses put a significant emphasis on the remoteness of certain regions of Nepal and their lack of accessibility linked to poor transportation infrastructures. Rural-urban migration patterns mainly comprise long-term migration or lifetime migration decisions, illustrating the idea that no other choice was deemed a better alternative by rural migrants. A 'non-return' type of decision transpires from slum dwellers' discourse, as the primary decision of moving to the capital city already implies important opportunity costs and time-consuming aspects. After selling their rural assets, migrants engage in a journey towards Kathmandu City with the idea that they are not to return – reasons given being lack of access to health and education facilities, along with low returns from agricultural activities.

My husband left his village with his whole family after they sold the land they had. (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)

We moved from Khotang 17 years ago. It is a very remote area. There is no access to any facility, not enough crop and bad harvest. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

We decided to come to Kathmandu because it was very difficult in the village for us. First my husband came to Kathmandu, working as helper on construction sites. Like temporary migration. I joined him one or two years later. We thought life would be better here. (spouse, female, 58, unskilled construction worker)

We moved from Banepa 35 years ago. It was difficult there, we had no land. When people move, they do not return. (head, male, 45, factory worker)

Pressure on rural families' size and limited agricultural land returns imply the existence of push factors from the rural areas, where rural families find themselves unable to provide for all family members due to harsh agricultural conditions and limited access to productive farm lands. The landslides affecting some parts of the rural areas in Nepal contribute to hastening the migration decision and often act as a decisive moment in rural families' migration history.

We moved to Kathmandu 25 years ago. From Sindhuli. We used to work in agriculture. But we moved to the city because we did not have our own land. (head, male, 60, mechanics)

In Dapcha, we had no food and harvest was not enough. We had little land in the hills, but landslide took it away. At that point, we decided to come to Kathmandu. (spouse, female, 58, unskilled construction worker)

We move to Kathmandu 19 years ago. We come from a village in Rautahat. A landslide took the land away and the fields were gone. Some of my family members died. So I left with a sukumbasi certificate, as a proof that I did not have any land in my village anymore. The mayor made it for me. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

As a result of important rural-urban migration flows, occupational patterns in the rural areas have experienced a shift from single agricultural strategies to a more diversified portfolio of activities such as small-scale businesses/ shops or daily farm work in other households' farming fields. Those who cannot afford to migrate to urban areas stay in the villages and work in others' fields while receiving lump sums from migrants' remittances which, to a limited extent, allow rural families to diversify their activities.

Most of our family is still in the rural areas. We have no family in Kathmandu. They have little land so some of them work in small business, selling alcohol in small hotels. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

Family reasons are also evoked by rural migrants as a motivating factor to move to the capital city and look for better opportunities than the ones they are offered within their villages. Relationships with the extended family therefore entail lifetime migration decisions as well, as orphans or rural migrants with poor family relationships tend to perceive migration decision as a non-return migration.

I moved from Dhankuta 10 years ago. I didn't want to leave but I got into an argument with my family and left alone. I had issues with my first husband. And my mother in law chased me. (spouse, female, 34, unskilled construction worker)

I moved from Hetauda around 20 years ago. I do not have anyone anymore in the village, my parents passed away. I was 10 year old back then. So I decided to come alone to Kathmandu. (head, male, 33, skilled construction worker)

I came from Okhaldunga when I was 13 year old. I came alone. I was an orphan, my parents had passed away and I had no family. I worked in a hotel when I arrived, and I did some domestic work as well. (head, male, 52, unskilled construction worker)

Another important aspect when exploring the migration history of slum dwellers relates to inner-city migration patterns. Once migrants reach the capital city, a limited number of housing solutions is available to them and often entails renting small rooms in poor neighbourhoods of Kathmandu where migrants have heard they can temporarily afford to stay before finding employment opportunities and cheaper housing alternatives. As such, the slum areas in Kathmandu are not the entry point to the city for rural migrants and squatting areas fulfil a later integrating function into the urban fabric as new migrants learn about their existence and gradually get the appropriate informal knowledge and social connections about how to access illegal squatting settlements. Inner-city migration stories therefore follow unexpected patterns as the new migrants find themselves 'hearing about' opportunities for moving to informal housing areas – occasions which tend to be embedded in small windows of opportunities migrant

households seize by chance and thanks to family or friends' informal knowledge about such housing opportunities.

Six years ago we came to Thapathali as there were Maoist elections going on. The ministers said we could stay here. My brother used to live nearby Thapathali and he heard about it. He reserved a spot for us. The rented room where we were living before was too expensive, we could not pay anymore. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

I heard about Thapathali 7 years ago, I knew the government was distributing land so I came. (head, male, 33, skilled construction worker)

We were walking nearby and saw Thapathali so we decided to save a spot there. (head, male, 42, unskilled construction worker)

The social function of slum areas in Kathmandu is therefore not a common transitory function offering shelter for new migrants before they get access to the regulated housing and renting markets; on the contrary, the decision to move to such areas happens in the later stages of inner-city migration, as migrants get information about how to legitimately enter the informal housing system. As observed in the case of the Thapathali slum settlement, the arrival of new comers is strictly regulated and linked to having pre-established connections with the local dwellers, demonstrating the idea that slum areas are far from being an open informal system accessible by any new migrant arriving in the capital city.

We moved from Bhojpur 8 years ago. And to Thapathali 6 years ago. We were renting a house, for 1000 Rs per month. But with the children, it became too difficult to pay for the rent every month. So when I heard about Thapathali from my neighbours, we decided to come here. (spouse, female, 28, unskilled construction worker)

Since we have no land, we've tried to settle in different slum areas, such as Balkhu, but everywhere it is very crowded. During the demonstration, people told me they were going to settle in Thapathali, so I came here. (head, male, 34, unskilled construction worker)

We started by living in a rented room in Thamel, then I heard from my friend that we could move to Thapathali because it was what most people were doing. (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)

Some people from our family had already settled here and told us about it. My cousins were living here first, we have good contacts. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

I heard about this place as I was walking around to sell clothes, I saw that some people were settling down, I asked a local political party if I could settle as well, I showed them my sukumbasi certificate and we were allowed to move there. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

The rural-urban social network and living strategies: First employment and labour market networks

Despite a tendency towards non-return migration and lifetime migration strategies, rural migrants tend to keep close linkages with their extended family and their family members who stayed in the rural areas. As a result, the existence of a rural-urban social network is closely related to the living strategies new comers put in place as they migrate to Kathmandu City, while their first employment and access to the urban labour market is strongly influenced by the type of

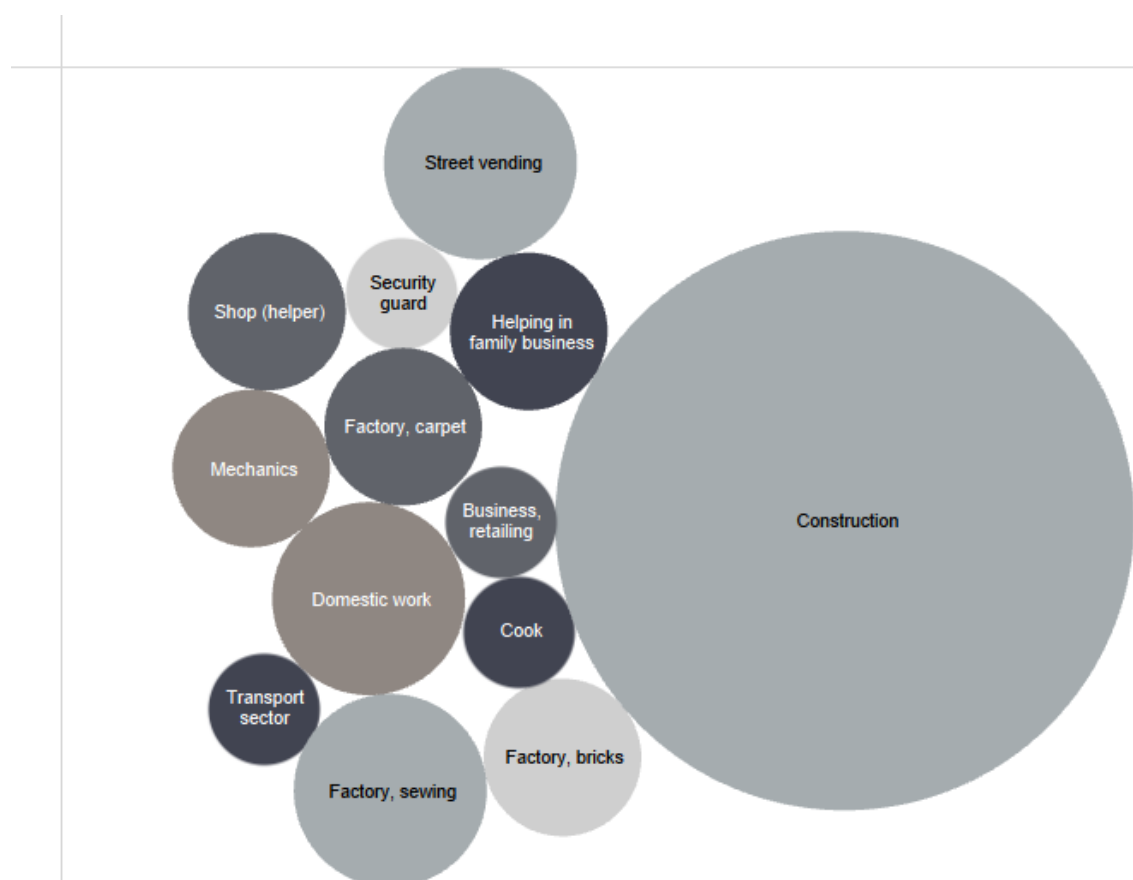
relationship they have with their kin at the time of migration and in the later stages of their migration history.

The first occupation of the household head at the time of migration is relatively similar for households currently staying in the Thapathali community. Informed by employment strategies of former rural migrants as they leave the rural areas, migrant workers find themselves working on construction sites in most cases as they arrive in the capital city, casual work being an easy-to-access first occupation accessible with limited knowledge of the urban labour market dynamics and with limited skills other than a good health condition allowing migrants to perform physical work. As a strategy employed by seasonal migrants who return to the villages after accumulating enough income from construction work, casual daily work is a 'known' strategy of the new migrants through rural networks.

Men sometimes come for seasonal work in Kathmandu, like construction work. They stay for 4 to 5 months, they live with their friends. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

The rural-urban network is therefore a strong indicator of why households decide to migrate and the type of activities they engage with as they reach Kathmandu City. Rural-urban migration patterns are embedded in collective behaviours and perceptions of migration, as imitative strategies can be observed between different inhabitants of a village or between family members belonging to the same extended family. Rural migrants are often following and replicating strategies from other migrants, such as their brother, cousin or parents, while spouses and children tend to follow their husband to the urban areas after husbands migrated alone in search of employment. Migration risks are therefore shared at the level of the household or even villages, as family members staying behind ensure the management of rural assets (land, houses, etc.) and provide a safety net to the alone-migrant as he/ she attempts to settle and make a living in the capital city with the perspective of a lifetime migration.

Figure 5.15 First employment of household head at the time of migration (percentage of total households, Thapathali community)



Family members who have already migrated to the urban areas also tend to provide support to the new comers and have a significant influence on the types of activities new migrants are able to access as they first settle in the urban areas.

We moved from Rautahat 23 years ago. We had land there and now our relatives are taking care of it. My brother left the village first and I decided to move as well. (head, male, 52, unskilled construction worker)

My husband has his own family in Kathmandu, he moved there first and then I came with the children. We have good contacts, they all live in a rented room. (spouse, female, 28, unskilled construction worker)

My husband was working in a factory. His friends from our village were already working there, so he came and started to work with them, in the same factory. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

As the rural-urban networks provide a first entry point to the urban labour market, new migrant workers start building their own knowledge about markets and identifying the skills they require to access better employment situations. As a result, the rural-urban connections are often shaped after a continuous pattern of mutual support, while both migrant workers and family members who stayed in the villages benefit from a continued relationship, the former to ensure they have a place to go back to if they cannot make a proper living in Kathmandu, the latter to

benefit from the enhanced employment situation migrant family members manage to access in the capital city.

I moved from Sarlhai 25 years ago, I moved to do business. I don't have land in the village, almost no family. My brother also moved to Kathmandu. (...) When I first moved, I knew no one. I lived in Kalimati in a rented room, for 2000 Rs per month. I had little money when I arrived. I learned how to do business by looking at how people were doing it. I learned by myself. Since my rent was quite expensive for me, I moved to Thapathali six years ago. Some of my relatives had told me about this place. (head, male, 50, grocery retailer)

I go back to my family quite often. I still have my sister and my mother in the village, they have land and do farming. I make contacts with fruit and vegetables sellers in my village, to get good prices. It helps them and it helps me. (head, male, 60, mechanics)

Patterns in the rural-urban nexus: The extended family and the importance of rural traditions

The establishment of long-term relationships between rural and urban areas can be observed through locally organised forms of social security that go beyond informal urban settlements and intensively rely on the existence of the rural-urban nexus. The nexus takes the form of a support network recurrently mentioned by slum dwellers as part of their coping strategies during periods of hardship, especially after the eviction events and the additional pressure on expenses faced by migrant households in the Thapathali area.

We have two daughters, but one of them is living in the village with her aunt at the moment. It has been six months, since the house got destroyed. She used to study in the community school. (head, male, 34, unskilled construction worker)

My children had to leave school as they were going to the community school that got destroyed with the bulldozers. Two of my sons are now with their uncle, learning skills about cooking. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

The rationale for keeping a long term relationship of support with the extended family who remained in the villages is further informed by the importance of rural traditions. Visits to the rural areas illustrate rural migrants' commitment to their local traditions as visits often occur during festival times, identified as a 'worthy' reason to undertake a visit to remote parts of Nepal where migrants originate from. Good relationships are therefore ensured through the celebration of symbolic events which importance is acknowledged by both migrant workers and their rural family members.

I still have a big family in my village, I go back during festival times, like I did seven months ago. (head, male, 37, unskilled construction worker)

I go back to my family quite often, for festival times. Last time was six months ago. (head, male, 52, unskilled construction worker)

Even remotely, the extended family keeps having an influence on rural migrants' ways of living and making a living. A significant proportion of slum dwellers mentions their family as taking part in their household's decisions, such as marriage, occupation or education related decisions. By keeping the extended family part of their urban decision processes, migrant workers embed their lives in the workings of the rural-urban nexus and therefore create a sphere of support that is considered an important asset for every family.

Kinship is still very important in someone's life, this is not changing much. Family influence on decisions is still very important. Like influence on marriage, on education. (head, male, 38, meat shop owner)

My father thinks the family profession is important. Sewing. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

Those who were unable to establish and maintain the rural-urban linkages are further deprived and report a greater number of struggles and difficulties experienced in their urban daily lives. Remoteness is mentioned as a crucial barrier to creating a sphere of support, which is often coupled with poverty situations experienced in the rural areas that migrants are trying to escape themselves. The extent to which financial help can be sought from relatives in the villages is in some cases limited and tends to articulate the support network around in-kind or moral types of support, such as assistance with children or sending food. This suggests that the sphere of support available for slum dwellers differs from one household to another. For poorer households, a precarious balance is established between rural and urban areas, whereby available support is channelled through and works towards maintaining living standards in both areas (**Figure 5.11**):

I don't have a family in rural areas anymore. Everyone I know now lives in Thapathali. They don't really help me financially, they are equally poor and do not have money themselves. (head, female, 45, handicraft work from home)

In the village we had no land. I haven't been back since I moved to Kathmandu but I have good phone contacts. (...) They do not help me financially. (spouse, female, 28, unskilled construction worker)

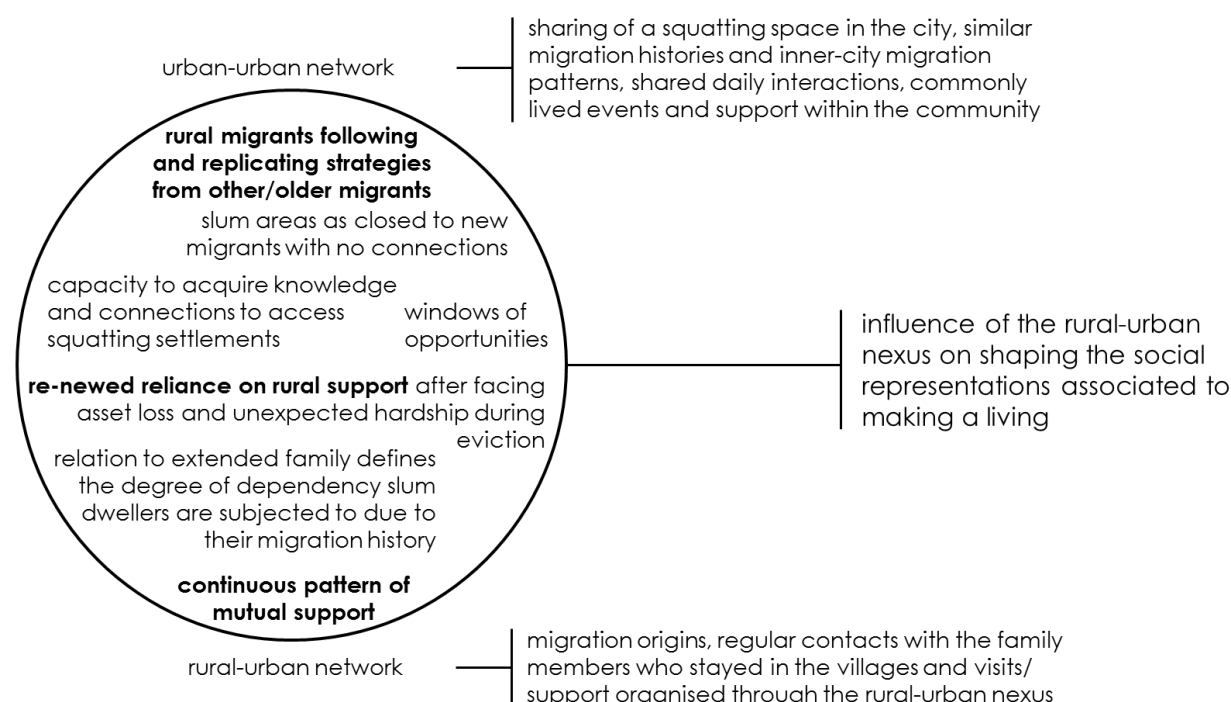
We do not get help from our family. We are all equally poor, how could they help us? I still have one brother and one sister-in-law in my village. They work as labourers in others' fields. I have my uncle as well. Sometimes the children go there. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

The role of networks in defining a shared space at the level of the Thapathali community is consequently structured around two axes: first, the urban-urban network, which is characterised by the sharing of a squatting space in the city, similar migration histories and inner-city migration patterns, shared daily interactions, commonly lived events and network supports within the community; second, the rural-urban network, which is anchored in migration origins, regular contacts with the family members who stayed in the villages and visits/ support organised through the rural-urban nexus (**Figure 5.16**). As such, the Thapathali community and the livelihood strategies of its inhabitants are far from being decided at the sole level of the settlement, and encompass dynamics from the rural-urban networks which are specific to each Thapathali household.

The Thapathali living space is shaped by recurring patterns when it comes to receiving support from external actors, such as family who stayed in the villages, family members already living in Kathmandu or relatives residing within the Thapathali community. Norms in rural societies are transposed at the level of the slum settlement and organise the ways in which individuals go about their living strategies in conjunction with urban knowledge about how to access housing and labour markets. As first or second generation migrants, some households in the squatting

community share a certain level of support and information they access through their extended families, which defines the degree of dependency slum dwellers are subjected to due to their migration histories. As such, the Thapathali settlement holds a range of patterns around which its dwellers organise their livings, which is partly specific to squatting communities and demonstrates the extent to which their living strategies are singular compared to other urban dwellers. Both horizontal and vertical networks shape the decision space of Thapathali dwellers, who, through the sharing of common migration patterns, establish their ways of making a living in a shared normative space characterised by both rural and urban norms.

Figure 5.16 An enclosed living space shaped by urban-urban networks and rural-urban networks



The extent to which a balance is found between rural and urban norms differs from one settlement to another, and the recent (seven year old) Thapathali settlement is currently shaping its balance by accommodating a variety of social norms and the room for manoeuvre of individual beliefs and behaviour vis-à-vis these norms at the level of its small-scale society, while coping with the uncertainty of eviction threats. While some households acknowledge a weakening of the rural-urban nexus after a certain period of time, the eviction events have counterbalanced this tendency towards a renewed reliance on rural support after facing asset loss and unexpected hardship.

Branching out of the micro-level structures: Role of networks in defining the normative space

As shown in **Section 5.3**, the urban-urban network is characterised by the sharing of a squatting space in the city, similar migration histories and inner-city migration patterns, and by shared daily interactions, commonly lived events and network supports within the community. It was found that the rural-urban network is anchored in migration origins, regular contacts with the family members who stayed in the villages and visits/ support organised through the rural-urban nexus. As such, the Thapathali community and the livelihood strategies of its inhabitants are far

from being decided at the sole level of the settlement, and encompass dynamics from the rural-urban networks which are specific to each Thapathali household.

The Thapathali living space is however shaped by recurrent patterns when it comes to receiving support from external actors, such as the families who stayed in the villages, family members already living in Kathmandu or relatives residing within the Thapathali community. Norms in rural societies are transposed at the level of the slum settlement and organise the ways in which individuals go about their living strategies in conjunction with urban knowledge about how to access housing and labour markets. As such, the Thapathali settlement holds a range of patterns around which its dwellers organise their livings, which is specific to migrant squatting communities and demonstrates the extent to which their living strategies are singular compared to other urban dwellers. Both types of network shape the decision space of Thapathali dwellers, who, through the sharing of common migration patterns, establish their ways of making a living in a shared normative space characterised by both rural and urban norms.

5.4 Patterns in strategies employed by slum dwellers for making a living

Some of the opportunities accessed by Thapathali squatters are presented below using primary data collected as part of the household survey¹¹⁷. Livelihood strategies are explored and explained across various dimensions and differentiated between activities carried out by main and secondary/ tertiary earners. Transport and place of work, along with the perceived barriers to accessing opportunities as expressed by slum dwellers themselves are presented in this section, before exploring coping strategies households follow when facing hardship periods – each of these aspects contributing to the broader picture of how slum dwellers '*make a living*'.

Formal and informal market opportunities accessed by slum dwellers

While '*making a living*' is a phrase that covers a wide range of strategies followed by households to ensure their survival, including household domestic work and in-kind types of work, formal and informal income-generating activities appear as a preponderant strategy for securing earnings for the purpose of survival in an urban commoditised economy in which reliance on cash is crucial. Income-generating activities carried out by Thapathali dwellers can be broadly categorised as follows: casual/ daily work opportunities (skilled and unskilled construction work), self-employment (home-based handicraft, shop owners, street vending, retailing) and regular waged work (factory work, transport work, shop/ office helper, domestic work, services (cooking, teaching), security work and mechanics/ plumbing work).

While the urban living context provides access to both formal and informal labour markets, the categorisation of income-generating activities deliberately focuses on employment status (casual / self-employed / regular) rather than the traditional formal-informal dichotomy for

¹¹⁷ The quantitative analysis of household level data has been triangulated using statistics from the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (NLSS 2010/11) conducted by the Nepalese Central Bureau of Statistics. The occupation profiles of Thapathali households are therefore benchmarked against statistics at national level, allowing an in-depth understanding of the wider formal and informal market opportunities accessed by slum dwellers.

the purpose of this research (although the distinction between formal and informal is still used to reflect respondents' answers when they chose to use these terms, and evidence from the literature when the formal-informal dichotomy is mentioned), as ways in which slum dwellers report and explain about their livelihood strategies has little to do with aspects of formality and informality, but rather put the emphasis upon the regularity/ irregularity of income and whether households are able to run small-scale businesses of their own. The formal-informal dichotomy encompasses a plurality of meanings and most criteria which have been used to discriminate between the two categories are found to be irrelevant in the context of the Nepalese economy. Work contracts involve both aspects of formality and informality, highlighting continuity between forms and contents of both formal and informal work situations.

The formal-informal dualism is therefore replaced here by the concepts of relevance, credibility and enforceability of work contracts, either formal or informal. For instance, being a regular waged worker might involve a formal contract between the slum dweller and the employer, even though the enforceability of that formal contract may fail to protect the employee's rights (e.g. formal firms hiring workers via 'informal' sub-contracting). A casual worker might work on construction sites without a written contract and receive a daily wage while in the meantime a regular wage worker might not get paid in time for his/her work. Domestic care services often imply a formal and written agreement between the employer and the employee, although domestic work encompasses a degree of informality through the absence of registration for taxation purposes. Self-employment presents similar aspects of formality and informality, with the existence of informal firms using inputs produced in the formal economy or informal lenders applying for formal bank credit. The informal sector has been further characterised by lower earnings relative to the formal sector, although in practice informal enterprises may have higher earnings than the average wage in the formal sector, but employees may earn less than the official minimum wage (e.g. unpaid family members).

As a result, while slum dwellers make permanent cognitive trade-offs between multiple norms from diverse origins (state, kinship, employers), they tend to assign relevance and credibility to these institutions according to their assessment of the income level, the regularity/ irregularity of work and their capacity to run a small-scale enterprise of their own rather than the formal guarantees they get when agreeing to a work situation. Access to opportunities is further governed by means and assets households or individuals have to offer when competing for opportunities, which relate to the capability to act and "*challenge the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources*" (Bebbington 1999: 2022). As illustrated within the Thapathali community, a variety of capitals are used by slum dwellers in order to make a living; beyond conventional assets such as land, skills (e.g. sewing skills) or basic infrastructural equipment (e.g. sewing machine), elements of human and social capital (e.g. family connections) play a distinctive and decisive role in accessing livelihood opportunities. The opportunities accessed by Thapathali squatters are therefore presented in the light of flexible combinations of and trade-offs between different capitals.

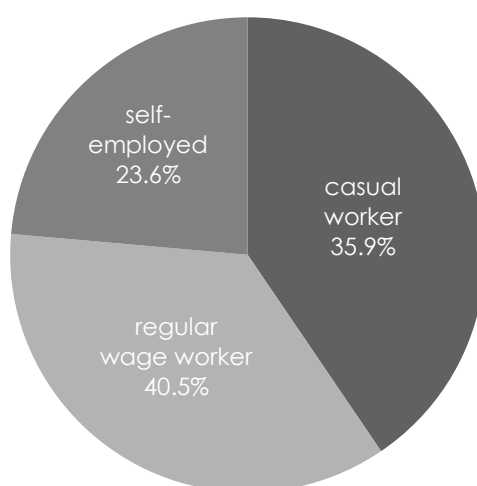
Benchmarking the occupation profiles of Thapathali households against statistics at national level

Illustrating the types of industries and sectors accessed by earners using national statistics gives an overview of the Nepalese labour market dynamics. Tables can be found in **Annex E** and feature regular and casual/ daily wage activities in the different sectors of the national economy, disaggregated by gender, geographical location and income quintiles. Urban areas are characterised by higher involvement in manufacturing activities, personal services and trade activities compared to the rest of the country, while Kathmandu reflects similar patterns with an additional emphasis on manufacturing (21.5% of total activities) and trade (12.8%). Females are more likely to be engaged in personal services and manufacturing activities, while men represent a large share of the construction sector earners. Earners from the poorest quintile are over represented in the construction sector, and rural-urban migration patterns can be explained by higher median daily wages in the non-agricultural sector in Kathmandu (300 NPR) compared to rural areas (200 NPR).

Regarding self-employment at national level, the annual net revenue is also higher in Kathmandu compared to other urban and rural areas, although the poorest quintile only contributes to 10% of the total annual revenue of self-employed earners in the capital city. Trade is the largest sector for self-employment opportunities, and the size of enterprises is relatively small, with 55% of the self-employed earners running small-scale businesses of 2 to 9 workers in Kathmandu.

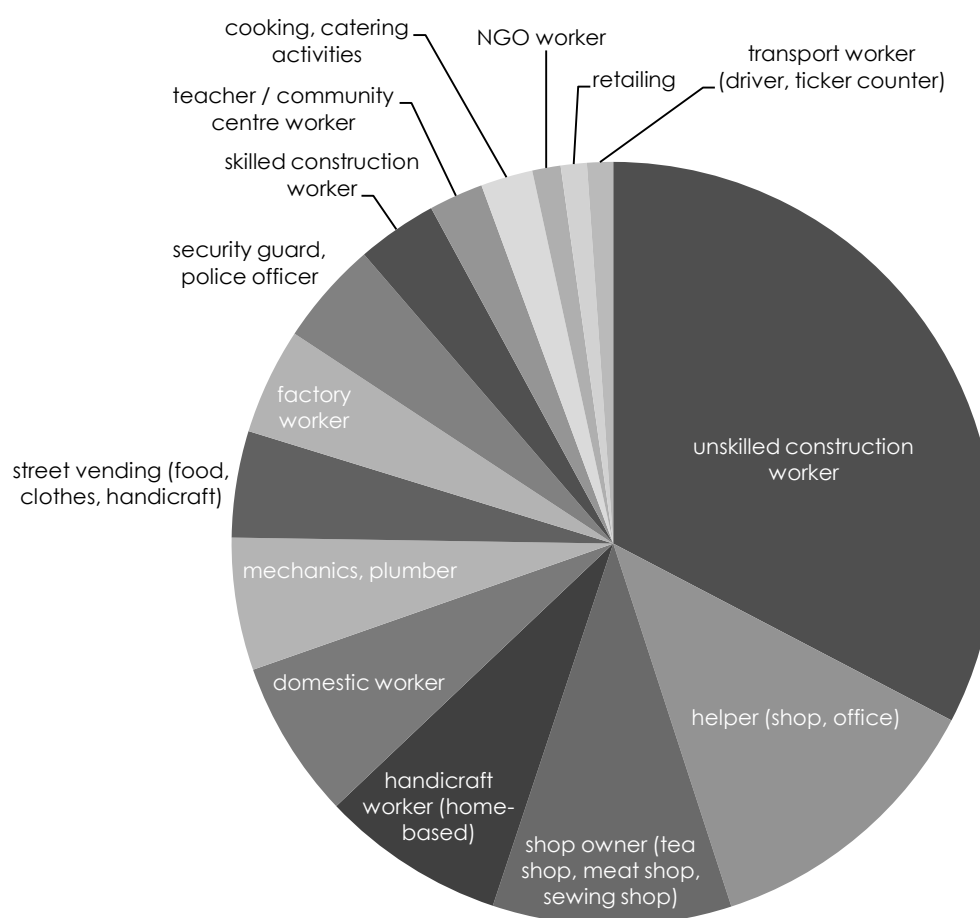
The opportunities accessed by slum dwellers and employment situations are presented using aggregate statistics compiled for the sub-group of earning members within the Thapathali community. The rationale for exploring employment situations by differentiating main earners and secondary/ tertiary earners at the household level lies in the additional insights gained from disaggregating intra-household level dynamics – while the opportunities accessed by main earners give a solid basis to the understanding of how households primarily make a living (mostly construction work), the employment situation of secondary/ tertiary earners reveal the intra-household diversification strategies used by households (mostly regular work), and unravel the flexible combinations of, and trade-offs between, different capitals (financial, human, social) held by different household members.

Figure 5.17 Type of employment of earning members (primary, secondary and tertiary)



As highlighted in the national statistics, lower income groups are more likely to be engaged in construction work compared to other income groups, and 35.9% of earning members in the Thapathali community are construction workers, of which 32.6% are engaged in unskilled construction work. Regular wage workers represent 40.5% of the total sample of earning members (although casual work is found the main livelihood strategy within the Thapathali community when strictly focusing on household head occupation) with a variety of activities ranging from manufacturing activities (factory work) to services (domestic work, helpers, guards, etc.). The self-employed (23.6%) are mostly shop owners, followed by home-made handicraft workers and street vendors (**Figures 5.17** and **5.18**). Detailed figures (%) can be found in **Annex E**.

Figure 5.18 Employment description of earning members (primary, secondary and tertiary)



As shown on **Figures 5.19** and **5.20**, the average monthly income differs by employment situation, with the self-employed (6777 NPR) and regular wage workers (6875 NPR) reporting higher earnings compared to casual workers (5260 NPR). Secondary and tertiary earners report lower monthly incomes, especially casual workers, as their number of working days significantly varies based on household expenses and the need for additional income. The three employment categories (casual work, regular work, self-employment) uncover significant disparities in earnings according to the different types of work: unskilled construction workers earn half the wage of skilled construction workers, while there is a 2600 NPR gap between average earnings of shop owners (7187 NPR) and average earnings of street vendors (4500 NPR). Domestic and transport

workers have lower earnings than the average regular wage earner, while office helpers and office workers (NGO workers) earn significantly more than factory workers or plumbers and mechanics.

On average, main earners have been engaged in their activities for a longer period of time than secondary and tertiary earners, which shows that earnings from other family members are more recent and reflect 'ad hoc', secondary strategies put in place by households in order to increase their total available income. Main earners tend to access opportunities through friends in Kathmandu or through friends in Thapathali. Friends in Kathmandu (outside Thapathali) are a more valuable type of social capital, as evidenced by ways in which skilled construction workers, retailers or office helpers get access to employment; friends in Thapathali are more likely to facilitate access to lower paid activities such as domestic work or unskilled construction work, enhancing the ways in which slum dwellers imitate each other's ways of making a living. Friends in Thapathali are an additional asset used by secondary and tertiary earners as the main social networks (Kathmandu-level) are mostly benefiting the main earners. Other family members therefore engage in secondary types of activities they can find through developing a network at the level of the Thapathali community.

Help from family and friends in villages is mostly reported as an important factor for accessing opportunities by street vendors and home-based handicraft workers, who establish their small-scale enterprises using strategies, stories and information from former village friends and family members. As such, street vending and handicraft are occupations which are mostly chosen by slum dwellers through the influence of village relatives *before the time of migration*, driving reasons for migration as migrants expect Kathmandu to be a facilitating urban market for conducting these activities.

Regular wage workers have differentiated strategies when it comes to the type of social capital they resort to for accessing opportunities. Family and friends living in Kathmandu are an important channel for information and recommendation for regular waged employment, demonstrating the existence of a privileged access to regular wage positions for households with relatives and acquaintances outside the Thapathali area. Work colleagues and neighbours from rented room (at the time when households were living in rented rooms) also play a significant role in accessing the appropriate social networks giving access to regular employment, showing the added-value of a diversified type of social capital for slum dwellers. Patterns therefore emerge at the level of the Thapathali community in terms of the ways in which slum dwellers manage to make a living, and demonstrate the existence of a range of combinations and trade-offs between different types of social capital.

Figure 5.19 Employment situations of primary earning members

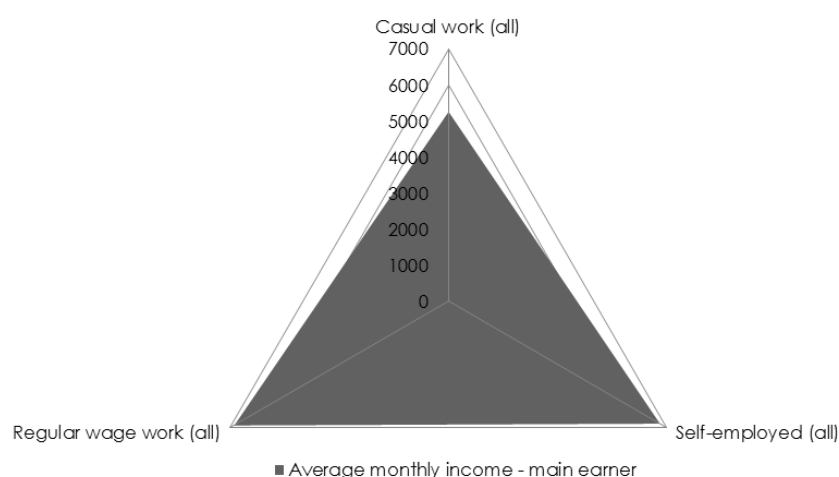
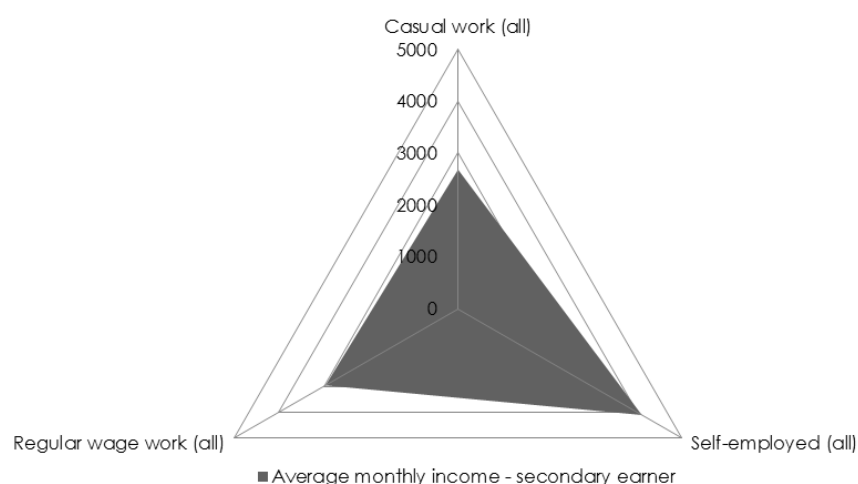


Figure 5.20 Employment situations of secondary earning members



Transport and place of work: Nearby opportunities and home-based self-employment

Transport and place of work are another crucial explanatory factor of the strategies carried out by slum dwellers for making a living. Nearby opportunities for slum dwellers are limited despite the Thapathali area being located in a central part of the city – the area being mostly surrounded by religious edifices and temples on the bank of the Bagmati river and educational institutions providing technical instructions such as the Thapathali Engineering Campus. A government hospital, private nursing homes and major corporations such as Rastriya Bima Sansthan, the Agricultural Development Bank and the Rastriya Banijya Bank are headquartered in the area, classifying the surroundings of the slum settlement as an administrative area with limited casual labour activities. Distance from place of work therefore entails important transport costs for dwellers who tend to favour home-based self-employed activities or street vending activities which can be carried out at any nearby crossroad compared to other types of activities.

Casual workers therefore rely on public transportation or walking/cycling to access their place of work, the distance to which largely depends on the location of construction sites. While some workers are able to find opportunities in nearby construction sites, casual workers' place of

work is constantly changing as they find temporary work in various parts of the city for limited periods of time. Regular wage workers have a fixed place of work for most of them, which is often located within walking or cycling distance from the Thapathali settlement and implies a comparative advantage for Thapathali as a home place compared to other slum settlements in the peripheral areas of Kathmandu. The proximity of offices and wealthy neighbourhoods where slum dwellers are able to find office helper positions or domestic work opportunities explains the high number of households engaged in regular work, while other groups of slum dwellers tend to report the difficulty to access work opportunities in nearby areas due to the inadequacy between slum dwellers' skills/ social capital and the office-type opportunities accessible in the city centre.

Perceived barriers relating to accessing opportunities as expressed by slum dwellers

Using slum dwellers' responses to the household survey, barriers relating to accessing opportunities are presented in this section which aims at giving an overview of the social representations around the difficulty to access work opportunities according to the different types of livelihood strategies (**Table 5.21**). Responses are disaggregated by main and secondary barriers identified, along with the importance given to social networks.

Table 5.21 Barriers to accessing opportunities as expressed by slum dwellers

Employment description	Main barrier	Importance of social network
Casual work (all)	Education/ Social network	Friends from Kathmandu/ Thapathali
Unskilled construction work	Education/ Social network	Friends from Kathmandu/ Family
Skilled construction work	Transport/ Education	Friends from Kathmandu/ Thapathali
Self-employed (all)	Education	All equally important/ Family
Handicraft (home-based)	Education	All equally important
Shop owner		Family
Street vending		Friends from Kathmandu
Retailing	Social network	Family
Regular wage work (all)	Social network	All equally important/ Friends from Kathmandu
Factory worker	Information/ Health	Friends from Kathmandu
Transport worker	Geographical isolation	All equally important
Helper (shop, office)	Education	Friends from Kathmandu
Domestic work	Social network	Family
Cooking, catering activities	Geographical isolation	All equally important
Teacher/community worker	Social network	
NGO worker	Education	
Security guard, police officer	Information/ Education	
Mechanics, plumber	Social network	Friends from Kathmandu

Lack of education and skills is the most important factor reported as a barrier to access opportunities by casual and self-employed workers whose activities heavily rely on construction and handicraft/ business type of skills.

I think if I had had more education, I could do better. I could do trainings in tailoring.
(spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

If you have construction skills you find a job easily. Like machinery skills. But it is difficult [otherwise]. (head, male, 42, unskilled construction worker)

Construction work is both good and bad, I can go whenever I want but it is difficult work. I wish I had learned sewing or tailoring. (head, female, 65, unskilled construction worker)

By contrast, regular wage workers complain about the lack of information about opportunities and the difficulty to access these with a limited social network, which are both facilitating factors for accessing formal positions for which workers are qualified. Skills and qualifications are therefore a necessary primary asset for entering the urban labour markets, but not a sufficient one as social capital plays an important role in granting a formal and legitimised access to such qualification-requiring opportunities. While casual workers tend to rely on friends and acquaintances for accessing construction work, friends from Kathmandu are of additional value for regular wage workers who need stronger social networks for entering regular employment systems.

Social networking is more and more important. They only hire the known ones. Skilful people are doing good. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

To find good work, you need to be in contact with big people, important people. (head, male, 37, unskilled construction worker)

I think there are power struggles when it comes to finding a job. You need to know the right person. First you need the right type of skills, and then the contacts. People who are going to give you work are not the ones in Thapathali, you need to have better contacts than that.
(head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)

Geographical isolation is another barrier for regular wage workers, who tend to perceive their living situation in the Thapathali community as a discriminating factor for accessing formal and regular job positions. Stigma around squatting areas is stronger for regular wage workers as their employers tend to discriminate against slum dwellers; having a formal address and a legitimate place to live is therefore a decisive factor for regular wage workers, compared to the self-employed or construction workers.

We are discriminated because we live in a slum. It is difficult to apply for formal jobs when you live here. (spouse, female, 50, domestic worker)

The self-employed put a greater emphasis on the lack of initial capital as a barrier for starting a business, rather than geographical isolation or lack of information about opportunities. Accessing higher earnings and other types of activities besides construction work or handicraft is therefore out of the reach of most slum dwellers, who report frustration around what they feel they are able to do for a living versus their actual capacity to start a small-scale business or engage in more rewarding types of activities besides the opportunities available to them:

Street vending is perceived as a good job, because you can do it anytime you like. It is flexible. It is better to have an independent business like this. But you need some financial capital and savings to start such a business. Initial amount needed is like 10 000 NPR. For

selling dry food or vegetables. Getting a loan for this is difficult though. (head, male, 45, factory worker)

Financial capital is very important when you try to make a living. Same with the social network, both friends and family play an important role. (head, female, 45, handicraft work from home)

Thing is, people do feel they could do something else. They just don't have the means to do it. (head, male, 42, driver/ticker counter)

As a result, main reasons for unemployment expressed by slum dwellers tend to relate to household chores (as other household members support the family) or disability, rather than a genuine lack of work opportunities. Beyond the barriers to employment expressed by slum dwellers as part of the household survey, daily casual work appears as the common last resort solution for households to increase their total available income and face unexpected expenditures. Unemployment cases are therefore rare and mostly related to health conditions, as slum dwellers report difficulties in managing household expenditures when family members are not able to work on construction sites due to ageing or physical conditions.

Types of making a living, diversification strategies and intra-household dynamics

Types of making a living in the Thapathali community are explored here through the lens of diversification and intra-household dynamics. Households tend to combine at least two or more types of activities and maximise the utilisation of household resources (labour and skills) in order to take advantage of any opportunities for income generation that the labour market provides at a given point in time. Diversification is “a process by which (...) households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living” (Ellis 2000: 37).

Strategies carried out by slum dwellers for making a living in the Thapathali community fall into the three broad categories of casual work, self-employment and regular employment. **Table 5.22** below presents the diversification strategies and intra-household dynamics of surveyed households. The second column describes the percentage of head/ spouse/ son/ daughter/ etc. engaged in a specific activity (first column) while being the main earning member. As an example, 56.5% of casual workers being the main earning member in their household are heads of household. This gives information about the allocation of activities by roles and functions of different household members. The third column shows the ratio of working household members/ household members of working age, broken down by activity of the main earning member. This implies that conclusions can be drawn as to the type of activity carried out by households with none, half, or all their members working in a specific sector (first column). Fourth column presents a diversification index, compiled as the percentage of households in which the main and secondary earners are engaged in the same earning activities. It reads for the first row of the table as 58.3% of households working as casual workers have both the main and secondary earner within their household working as casual workers. Consequently, the higher the percentage is, the lower the diversification of income sources is (i.e. several household members engaged in the same income-generating activity, here casual work). Fifth column describes, by type of earning activity, who in the household makes decisions about supporting the family

(resources allocation, allocation of household members to domestic tasks or earning activities, decisions about education, marriage, social events, household expenses in general). The data comes from the household survey, as respondents were asked to identify who in the household was responsible for making such decisions. Finally, information related to the existence of a family occupation over several generations was gathered from respondents, and shows interesting patterns with respect to the perpetuation of certain livelihood strategies from one generation to another (column six).

Table 5.22 Diversification strategies and intra-household dynamics

	Relationship to the head of household	Ratio of working household members	Diversification index ¹¹⁸	Who makes decisions	Existence of a family occupation
Casual work (all)	Head (56.5) Spouse of head (34.8) Son/Daughter (8.7)	0.88	58.3	Father & Mother (47.8) Wife (30.4) Husband (21.7)	None (100.0)
Unskilled const. work	Head (52.3) Spouse of head (38.1) Son/Daughter (9.5)	0.94	58.3	Father & Mother (52.3) Husband (23.9) Wife (23.8)	None (100.0)
Skilled const. work	Head (100.0)	0.50	n.a.	Wife (100.0)	None (100.0)
Self-employed (all)	Head (61.1) Spouse of head (27.8) Son/Daughter (5.6) Niece/Nephew (5.5)	0.89	16.7	Husband (38.9) Wife (38.8) Father & Mother (22.3)	Yes (33.4), None (66.6)
Handicraft (home-based)	Head (83.3) Spouse of head (16.7)	1	16.7	Wife (66.7) Father & Mother (33.3)	Yes (50.0), None (50.0) Handicraft, metal work, tailoring
Shop owner	Head (50.0) Spouse of head (37.5) Niece/Nephew (5.5)	0.81	0.0	Husband (62.5) Wife (25.0) Father & Mother (12.5)	Yes (37.5), None (62.5) Tailoring and cooking
Street vending	Head (33.3) Spouse of head (33.3) Son/Daughter (33.3)	0.50	0.0	Husband (33.4) Wife (33.3) Father & Mother (33.3)	None (100.0)

¹¹⁸ It reads as follow: the higher the index, the less livelihood strategies are diversified across earning members within a household. 'n.a.' indicates that the index is non-applicable due to the fact there is only one earning member in the household. '0.0' indicates that earning members in a household are all engaged in different activities.

In terms of the allocation of activities by roles and functions of different household members, it appears that self-employment and regular waged work are more likely to be activities carried out by the head of household, while casual work is a type of income-earning activity which is carried out by both heads (56.5%) and spouses of the head (34.8%) of household (as main earners). Self-employed workers also tend to involve all members of the household and the extended family in their activities: Head (61.1%), Spouse of head (27.8%), Son/Daughter (5.6%), Niece/Nephew (5.5%). Regular waged work is the type of income-earning activity that employs the fewer household members in terms of the ratio of working household members /household members of working age in these households where regular waged work is the main earning strategy (72% of working age household members working) – compared to households where casual work (88%) and self-employment (89%) are the primary strategy. It follows that casual work and self-employment are more likely to be activities that require family assets (existing family-run enterprise) or social capital (such as contacts with construction workers for instance) – so that other household members are able to engage in these activities as well. This finding is confirmed by the diversification index, which for households where casual work is the main livelihood strategy shows that 58.3% of households are households in which the main and secondary earner are engaged in the same earning activities (here, construction work). Nevertheless, the diversification index also demonstrates that the self-employed have on average better diversification strategies, as only 16.7% of households where self-employment is the main earning activity have their secondary earner engaged in similar self-employment activities. This indicates that while the main strategy is self-employment, the secondary earner in the household tends to be engaged in casual or regular work, thereby providing a safety net for the household in cases of adversity.

	Relationship to the head of household	Ratio of working household members	Diversification index	Who makes decisions	Existence of a family occupation
Regular wage work (all)	Head (70.0) Spouse of head (20.0) Son/Daughter (5.0) Spouse of son/daughter (5.0)	0.72	25.0	Husband (65.0) Wife (20.0) None (15.0)	None (100.0)
Factory worker	Head (100.0)	0.56	0.0	Husband (75.0) Father & Mother (25.0)	None (100.0)
Transport worker	Head (100.0)	1	0.0	Husband (100.0)	None (100.0)
Helper	Head (100.0)	0.81	0.0	Husband (66.7) Father & Mother (33.3)	None (100.0)

Domestic work	Spouse of head (100.0)	0.50	0.0	Husband (50.0) None (50.0)	None (100.0)
Cooking, catering	Head (100.0)	1	8.3	Husband (100.0)	None (100.0)
Teacher/ community worker	Spouse of head (100.0)	0.75	0.0	Father & Mother (100.0)	None (100.0)
NGO worker	Spouse of head (100.0)	0.50	0.0	Father & Mother (100.0)	None (100.0)
Security guard, police	Head (50.0) Son/Daughter (25.0) Spouse of son/daughter (25.0)	0.80	8.3	Husband (50.0) None (50.0)	None (100.0)
Mechanics, plumber	Head (100.0)	0.60	8.3	Husband (100.0)	None (100.0)

Who in the household makes decisions about supporting the family (resources allocation, allocation of household members to domestic tasks or earning activities, decisions about education, marriage, social events, household expenses in general) varies according to the type of activities household members are carrying out. The 'husband' in households engaged in regular waged work tends to be in charge of households decisions (65.0% of regular waged households declared that the husband was the one taking decisions for the family), while in self-employed households, both the 'husband' (38.9%) and the 'wife' (38.8%) have a say in household decisions. This may be explained by the fact that power structures within the household unit differ in households where the head of household is a regular-waged worker (more likely to be the main and unique earning member of the household) compared to households in which different household members contribute to the household's survival (self-employed main earner; secondary earners engaged in other strategies, while other household members contribute to running the family-based enterprise).

Finally, the influence of the extended family is deemed important only by households who carry out self-employment as a main strategy, and more specifically by shop-owning households of which 12.5% reports the importance of the kin system in providing social capital and financial assets. Home-based handicraft workers and shop-owners declared the existence of a perpetuating mechanism in the type of livelihood strategies from one generation to another: 50% of households in which handicraft work is the main livelihood strategy have been working in handicraft (metal work and tailoring) in the previous generations, and 37.5 % of shop-owning households have previous generations (parents or grandparents) who were involved in tailoring

and/or cooking, demonstrating the importance of skills transmitted from one generation to another in these sectors. It should be noted that skills in a caste-based context such as Nepal are closely related to caste social functions and the rules around the preferential occupation for each caste group, perpetuated within families. As such, skills transmitted from one generation to another are often caste-based skills such as metal work skills or tailoring skills, and slum dwellers, as they migrate from rural to urban areas, tend to adapt their set of skills to the urban labour market in which they find opportunities to transform their caste affiliation and related skills into income-generating strategies. Based on responses to the household survey, it can be observed that diversification is perceived by slum dwellers as being possible to the extent that they possess the necessary skills. 'Doing something different' or 'doing better' are only deemed possible through the differentiation of skills, which slum dwellers associate with better education and/or acquiring technical skills.

If you have construction skills you find a job easily. Like machinery skills. But it is difficult.
(head, male, 42, unskilled construction worker)

Sewing is not too bad because people acknowledge you have a skill. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

Within the household, the heterogeneity in interests and behaviours is highlighted through the decisions and distribution of functions, as the head of household is more likely to earn income and the spouse to decide upon household expenses. As such, a collective behaviour (not a strategy per se) – *making a living at the level of the household* – seems to emerge from the inner organisation of household functions in the Thapathali households, as an *implicit agreement* or *balance* is found between the different household members and the functions to be fulfilled in a household. Unemployment of some of the household members is therefore not always synonymous of certain household members not finding opportunities on the labour market, but rather hints at the fixed distribution of roles between household members – e.g. female household members carrying the burden of household chores or having to look after children, and therefore 'used' as additional earning members for casual activities when needed.

We both make decisions. My husband earns the money and I feed the family. I make the decisions about household expenditures. (spouse, female, 30, unemployed)

My husband is the one making decisions. About everything. I just cook food and provide for everyone. (spouse, female, 37, unemployed)

Both my husband and I work in construction work. But with the young children, I cannot go as often as I want, so we do not earn that much money. (spouse, female, 28, unskilled construction worker)

In most cases, the household unit is perceived and used as a unit in which agents can pool resources and organise themselves according to the functions they can carry out. The household unit serves as a safety net for its members, as made implicit from the different functions of each member.

My wife cannot work, since she suffers from a heart disease. It has been 7 years now, but she does the domestic chores. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

When we run out of money, we prefer not to take a loan because we know we cannot repay. Children work and help, they do mechanics, repairing jobs in motorcycle workshop for instance. (spouse, female, 40, unskilled construction worker)

Hardship periods and coping strategies

As previously pointed out in this chapter, reasons mentioned for the last period of hardship experienced by households fall into various categories, from expenses dedicated to festivals, expenses faced when a new baby is born, to expenses entailed by the eviction and associated loss of asset. Wealthier households are more likely to experience hardship as a result of eviction or sickness of a family member, which illustrates the unpredictable aspect of expenses induced by these two types of event. Poorer households are more widely affected by other types of unexpected expenses (no work in sector, shifting to a new job), or recurring expenses such as festival times and related social expenses, as their capacity to rely on buffer savings is less compared to richer households. **Table 5.23** presents the different aspects of periods of hardship, disaggregated by type of activity carried out by the main earner in the household. For instance, among casual workers, 21.4% of the surveyed households declared that household earnings and expenses were *enough*; *manageable* (21.5%), or *not enough* (57.1%). Reasons for the last period of hardship are presented in order of importance.

Table 5.23 Periods of hardship and coping strategies

	Whether what household earns is enough to support household	Last period of hardship	Reason for last period of hardship	Coping strategy during last period of hardship
Casual work (all)	Enough (21.4) Manageable (21.5) Not enough (57.1) Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Eviction / No work in sector / Festival times	Loan from friends in Thapathali / Relying on more casual labour hours / Loan from family
Self-employed (all)	Enough (27.7) Manageable (27.7) Not enough (36.4) Several hardship periods (9.2)		Eviction / Sickness of one family member	Loan from friends outside Thapathali / Loan from family / Survival on savings
Regular wage work (all)	Enough (37.5) Manageable (25.0) Not enough (37.5) Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago / More than 2 years ago	Sickness of one family member / Eviction / Baby born	Loan from family / Loan from friends in Thapathali

It appears that reasons evoked for the last period of hardship (fairly consistently occurring six months ago for most slum dwellers) differs from one household to another depending on the type of activity carried out by the main earning member. Casual workers are likely to report the absence of work in the construction sector as a hardship as work opportunities are fairly inconsistent over time, and casual work, although a flexible source of income, does not provide sufficient resources for households to cope with irregularities of employment.

Coping strategies in context

National-level data (Nepal Living Standard Survey, 2010/11) presents information related to the most likely steps taken to alleviate or overcome food scarcity, which can be used as a proxy for dominant coping strategies in situations of hardship. The adequacy of consumption and income is based on the subjective judgment of the respondents. Respondents are asked to report the degree of adequacy of food, housing, clothing, health care, children's schooling and total income of the household. Such a degree is grouped into three categories: "*less than adequate*", "*just adequate*" and "*more than adequate*". **Table 5.24** below shows the percentage of respondents who reported each of the following categories (eating cheaper or less preferred foods; borrowing food or money; buying food on credit; etc.) as being the primary step taken by their household to alleviate or overcome food scarcity.

The data shows that the most likely steps taken to alleviate or overcome food scarcity are to borrow food or money (68.5%), followed by buying food on credit, eating cheaper or less preferred foods and eating less for each meal. Main differences between rural and urban areas lie in the ability to buy food on credit versus to borrow food or money, as rural households are more likely to rely on social networks in the villages to access food via borrowing (69.6%) compared to urban households who tend to resort to buying food on credit (61.2%).

Table 5.24 Steps taken to alleviate or overcome food scarcity

Types of coping strategies	Nepal	Urban	Rural
Eat cheaper or less preferred foods	50.9	54.9	50.4
Borrow food or money	68.4	59.3	69.6
Buy food on credit	57.1	61.2	56.5
Eat wild-food or unripen crop-food	6.2	1.2	6.8
Eat seeds preserved for sowing	13.1	5.3	14.1
Send household members to eat elsewhere	9.3	5.4	9.8
Send household members for begging	3.7	3.9	3.6
Eat less for each meal	41.5	42.3	41.3
Feed children by reducing adult member's share	17.5	11.9	18.3
Feed working members by reducing other's share	7.5	4.8	7.9
Ration available money among household members	3.1	7.3	2.6
Reduce number of meals in a day	33.4	36.2	33.1
Skip days without meals	10.9	5.1	11.7
Sell assets/jewellery to buy food	5.8	5.9	5.8

Source: Nepal Living Standard Survey, 2010/11

Self-employed declare being in a situation of hardship as a result of the sickness of a family member and costs associated with sickness. Family-run enterprises, and small-scale businesses are difficult to hold when the household workforce cannot be fully mobilised due to sickness. Regular waged workers, on the other hand, are less affected by hardship, or at least less regularly than casual workers or the self-employed, although their reliance on the regular waged position of one household member entails income insecurity if the primary earner becomes sick. The importance of festivals and religious celebrations and their influence on hardship periods are mentioned by most slum dwellers – as social expenses are seen as 'unavoidable' expenses for households to maintain their social status within the community:

(...) During festival times, four or five months ago, we ran out of money. We had to buy clothes, and then we had to do with what we had. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

When we run out of money, like during festival times, we get small donations from my family.
(spouse, female, 58, unskilled construction worker)

Periods of hardship are around festival times. Last time was six months ago. We had to buy new clothes. (spouse, female, 40, unskilled construction worker)

On average, wealthier households tend to survive on savings, take a loan from their family or send their dependents to their extended family who stayed in the villages, demonstrating the important role of the family support network for richer households. Poorer households have to resort to relying on more casual labour hours, on children's work or taking a loan from friends.

What are the micro-level structures that frame the normative environment (norms and social representations) in which agents make decisions?

As exposed in this chapter, different factors intervene in the shaping of the Thapathali community as a social group with an existence of its own, governed by a specific set of rules and shared social representations.

Micro-level structures framing the normative environment

Recurrent social representations were expressed at the level of the Thapathali slum area, with micro-level structures emerging from the sharing of a confined geographical area and specific events occurring in the wider urban environment, its housing opportunities and its labour market. The sense of belonging which dwellers exhibit in a small-scale social entity such as the Thapathali settlement cannot be located or explained within the socio-economic structural dimensions of the community, but is expressed through the reproductive behaviours and imitative strategies replicating traditional rural structures of support and undifferentiation, translated from the village structure to the urban community structure. In the absence of acknowledged socio-economic differences, the existence of mechanical solidarity is the way to maintain a sense of homogeneity at the level of the community – crucial to ensuring the symbolic balance between being integrated to the competitive urban economic and labour markets and benefiting from a smaller-scale community of support in which every other dweller is found experiencing living conditions (with different income levels) comparable to his/her neighbour.

The coexistence of parallel systems

The focus on individuals' narratives revealed the existence of sub-groups, as contradictory social representations emerged during the interviews conducted with each household. This demonstrates the existence of various power structures within the slum community, and different narratives are used by agents in order to navigate around the different groups holding different beliefs in the community. The narratives created around the normative beliefs framing the slum environment reveal the existence of different degrees of access to the various networks and opportunities available to each sub-group, suggesting the existence of parallel systems coexisting within the overarching narrative agents refer to as they express their views vis-à-vis the community or their sub-group.

The normative environment: Norms versus normative beliefs

As such, the existence of social representations suggests that a group of agents expects similar outcomes from a given behaviour – that is, the mere fact of sharing common views at the level of the entire community or sub-groups in the community implies that common beliefs, encompassing the 'common view' and thereby the views of others on a given situation, exist and define the boundaries of one or several belief systems. It is important to note that belief systems are the only observables, and that norms per se cannot be measured or assessed in agents' discourse for the reason that these norms are entangled with personal beliefs and attitudes. Through their discourse, agents therefore relayed 'normative beliefs', i.e. beliefs which are influenced by norms or definitions of what is acceptable. Norms are found to contribute to giving shape to the ways in which agents make sense of the values deemed acceptable within the community and within the city context – while the resulting normative beliefs have a prescriptive role in determining how agents make decisions within their groups.

6. Decision practices

Following the presentation of the ways in which the environment and the perceptions of the environment affect slum dwellers' decision-making (**Phase 1** of the methodological approach, in **Chapter 5**), the research, as part of **Phase 2** of the methodological approach, investigates decision-making processes and decisions practices. This chapter explores the ways in which the micro-level structures affect agents' decision-making pathways (cognition), and the ways in which the practice of norms, at the level of sub-groups (group membership), influence the perpetuation of specific decision-making pathways. The analysis of the decision processes and practices within sub-groups/ fields follows the steps outlined in **Figures 6.1** and **6.3**. The methodological approach (**Phase 2**) is described in **Table 6.2**.

Figure 6.1 Understanding decision-making processes related to making a living

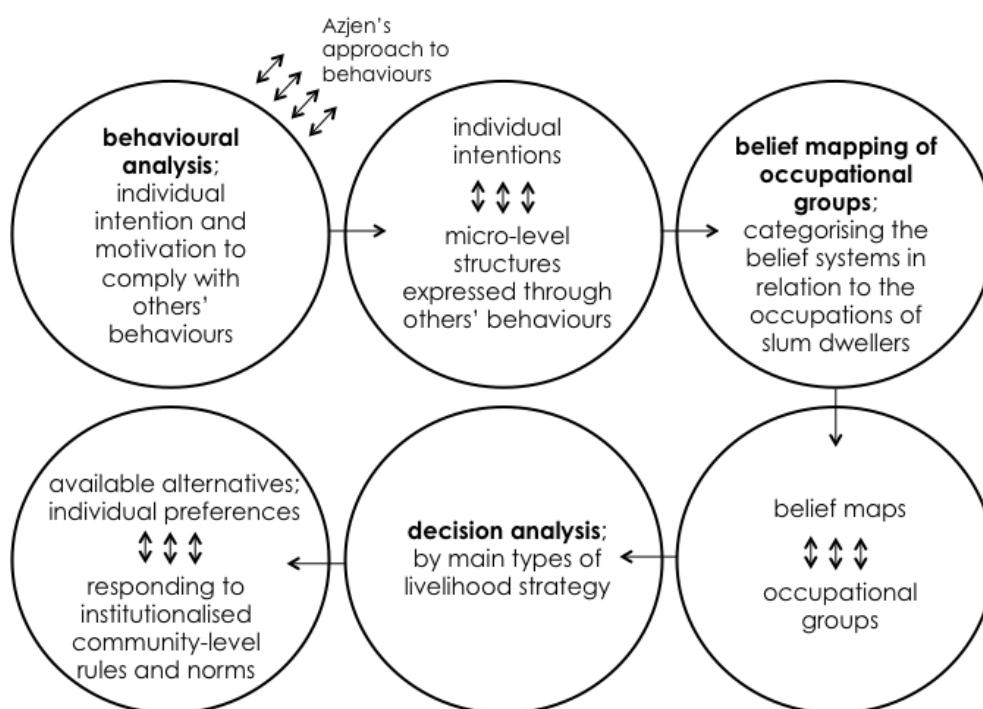
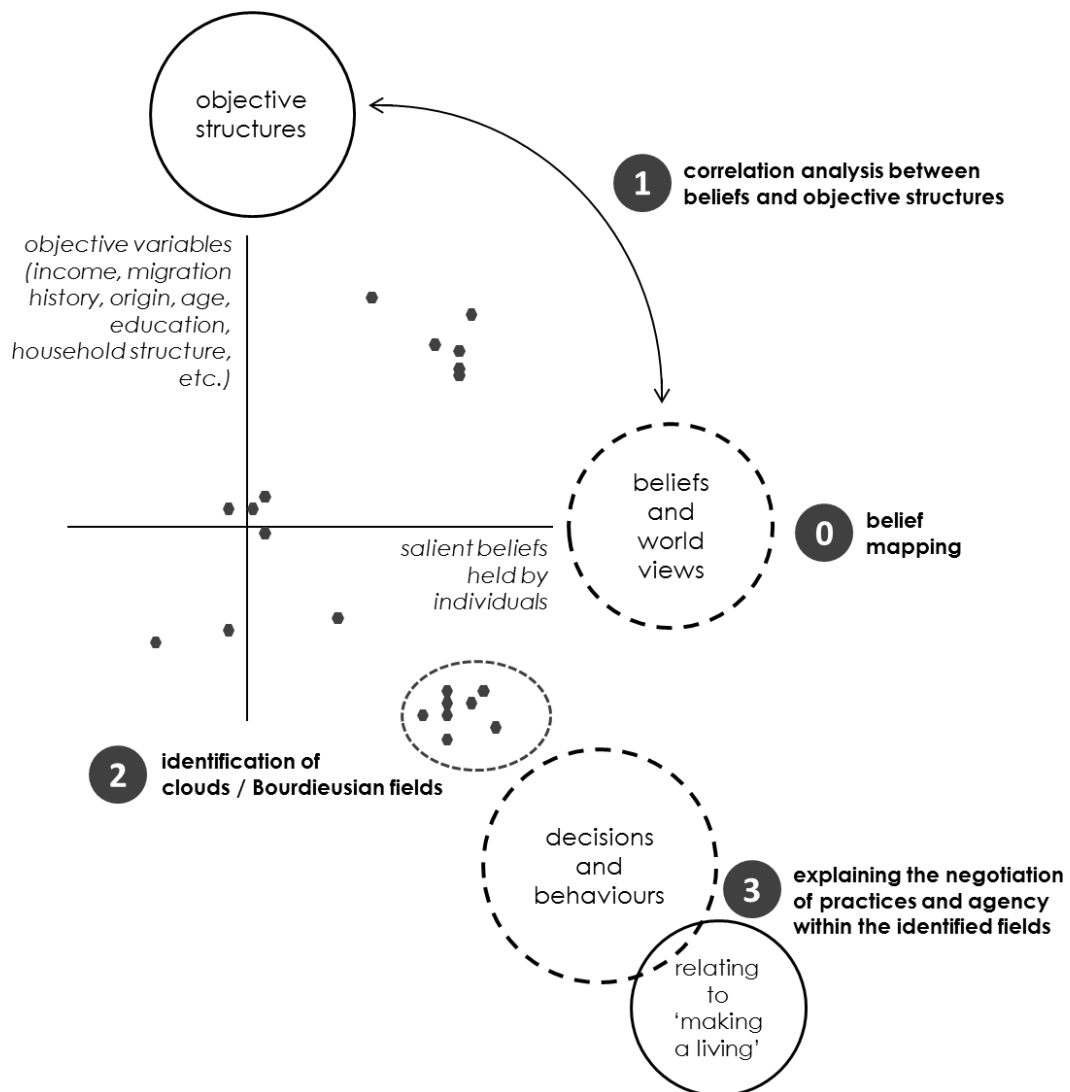


Table 6.2 Methodological approach for data analysis

Phase and objective	Type of analysis	Data used for the analysis
<i>Phase 2: Decision-making processes and decision practices</i>		
Normative analysis: How norms influence decision-making processes	Behavioural analysis (individual intention and motivation to comply)	Household survey and interviews with slum dwellers
	Belief mapping by occupational groups	
	Decision-making mapping by main type of livelihood strategy	
Decision practices within and between groups from the perspective of sharing similar characteristics	Bourdieuian fields' analysis and correspondences between objective structures and normative systems	Household survey and slum dwellers' perception survey

From a cognitive perspective, decision-making analysis is drawn from Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action and aims at investigating individual decisions, the subjective norms and the motivation to comply with others' behaviours (behavioural analysis). From a social sub-group perspective¹¹⁹, individual decisions (decision analysis) are examined in the context of the sub-groups to which agents belong as they share a similar set of objective characteristics. The practice of norms within these sub-groups is explored following Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 Staged-process to analysing the correspondence between objective structures/fields and salient beliefs



Caution should apply while reading the findings related to decision practices, as these were analysed using a sample of the total population living in Thapathali (50 households out of approximately 200 households). While randomly selected, the sample is not statistically representative of the total population.

¹¹⁹ Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is therefore applied to the case study by considering the Thapathali community as a 'society of its own', within which different social groups (here, sub-groups) co-exist. This approach is more particularly enabled by the atypicality of the case study under scrutiny –partially isolated from the influence of newcomers and set within a delimited timeframe (settlement, eviction, post-eviction). Refer to Chapter 1.

6.1 Behavioural analysis: Exploring individual intentions and motivation to comply with others' behaviours

Intentions and motivations are explored using Ajzen's approach to behaviours as being influenced by micro-level social structures. While micro-level structures are identified as organisational structures with an autonomous existence (representations with a deontic form on specific behaviours, commonly shared by a social group), the analysis of these sets of *structuring* beliefs follows a two-folded unpacking strategy: on the one hand, institutional forces (**norms**) are illustrated through their expression at the level of individual intentions to perform (or not perform) a behaviour (**attitudes and beliefs**); on the other hand, the subjective interpretation of how individuals behave based on their motivation to comply with others' behaviours (**subjective norms or normative beliefs**) is presented as another, sometimes competing, manifestation of norms within the Thapathali community.

attitudes	beliefs	norms	subjective norms
are individually-defined preferences towards a behaviour	are the anticipated and likely outcomes of a behaviour and the evaluations of these outcomes	are the expectations of others and the motivation to comply with these expectations	are the normative beliefs that result from perceived social pressure

Ways in which individuals make their decisions can be derived from unpacking micro-level structures under these two categories, which shows the extent to which local norms and sets of belief influence individual behaviours. By unravelling the existing correlations between individual intentions and motivations to comply with others' behaviours for each of the micro-level structures identified, the extent to which social representations are embedded within the Thapathali community is exposed in this section as a preliminary step preceding the identification of the different worldviews for each livelihood group.

As already noted in **Chapter 5**, it is important to note that **attitudes and preferences** are different from **normative beliefs** only to the extent that a subtle line can be drawn between the interdependence of attitudes and preferences vis-à-vis the normative beliefs that shape one's unconscious attitudes towards a behaviour. As such, individual intentions and attitudes are likely to be already affected by others' behaviours and what is considered as the 'norm' within a community. Similarly, the 'norm' is never clearly spelt out as a definite piece of information that would direct how one lives. On the contrary, norms only exist to the extent that these are internalised by agents and transformed into **subjective norms or normative beliefs** – i.e. on the one hand, beliefs that one may believe are his/her own, and on the other hand, norms that one holds true as a rule based on his/her subjective interpretation of the (unwritten and 'shapeless') 'norm', the interpretation of which may differ from one agent to another.

Micro-level structure #1: The city context and other social classes

Micro-level structures relating to the city context and urban social classes can be framed under three categories of attitudes/ beliefs and subjective norms: the symbolic system of money and urban commoditisation; the relationship between being successful and achieving social status; and the existence of simple living aspirations (valuation neglect). Across these three categories, the city context and other classes refers to the influence of wider social representations of the city, the urban space and different urban groups living in the city that dictate agents' intentions towards performing a behaviour and the extent to which 'others' in the slum community feel about certain types of behaviours compared to others.

	intention to perform a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs)	motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs)
Symbolic system of money and urban commoditisation	intention to make a living in financial terms, in order to gain access to commodities	belief dictated by a place, the capital city, where the degree of marketisation of goods such as food, clothes or rent imply a higher reliance on the cash economy compared to the rural areas; compliance with urban dwellers' belief that money is a sign of success <i>Here in Kathmandu, it is important to have jobs with a high pay.</i> (head, male, 30, street vendor)
Money, being successful and social status	intention to strive for success and achieve a high-earning living; willingness to free oneself from financial constraints	money perceived as important for social status; motivation to strive for high-earning activities in order to find a place in the urban community while ensuring money-making activities are seen as 'honourable'; money for the purpose of helping others (as they can help in return) and for conformity (affording city-like clothing, food and education)
Valuation neglect and simple living aspirations	intention to keep aspirations low; intention to strive for survival rather than high standard living conditions <i>My expectations about Kathmandu were not that high. I wanted to live a simple life; I thought I could have this here. Here in Thapathali I don't have to pay rent, so I can put more money in household expenses. But all in all, I didn't get the simple life I wanted.</i> (head, male, 45, factory worker)	extent to which the dispositions of slum dwellers to strive for further opportunities are limited by their own interpretation of their situation; valuation neglect and shared representation of the idea that money does not rime with a peaceful living <i>Successful people are not about money. If you have no peace in your heart, money does not matter.</i> (head, male, 38, office delivery worker)

Urban norms in Thapathali are grounded in the contrasted views that agents have the will to free themselves from the financial constraints that an urban, commoditised environment imposes on them, while money is perceived as a synonym for financial success and guarantees social status and conformity with urban norms. Inequalities within the different urban groups encourage agents to seek access to goods that are not affordable to them and a strict necessity for their living (**Symbolic system of money and urban commoditisation**). As such, the motivation to strive for high-earning activities is first and foremost linked to the necessities of survival, although it also relates to finding a place in the urban community and ensuring that socially-marked goods such as clothing are affordable to agents as they navigate the city in search of opportunities or for other types of daily activities. As Smith (1776) pointed out,

By necessities I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life. (...) But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day-labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt (...). Custom, in the same manner, has rendered leather shoes a necessary of life in England. The poorest creditable person of either sex would be ashamed to appear in public without them. (...) Under necessities, therefore, I comprehend, not only those things which nature, but those things which the established rules of decency have rendered necessary to the lowest rank of people.
(Smith 1776: Book 5, Chapter 2, Article 4)

The social necessities described by Smith entail a form of forced compliance with being able to afford 'city-like' clothing, food and education. Interestingly, slum dwellers in Thapathali acknowledge the need for a 'high pay' to access these social necessities, although money-making activities are only deemed acceptable to the extent that they are seen as 'honourable'; money should be made for the purpose of helping others (as they can help in return) and for conformity (urban norms), not for the sole aspect of enriching oneself. The micro-level structure around the city context and other social classes inhabiting the urban space entails specific representations on what money symbolises for the specific community of slum dwellers. The extent to which money is associated with social status, valuation neglect and/or simple living aspirations is a clear indicator of slum dwellers finding themselves reluctant to identify and legitimise the existence of different socio-economic groups at the level of the community, and therefore reluctant to acknowledge money and wealth as goals rather than means to comply with what 'others' view as honourable uses of wealth (**Money, being successful and social status**).

In spite of undifferentiation, every agent can rationally be assumed to be striving for their own living, although valuation neglect and conformity are two forces that contradict how one should go about making his/her living (**Valuation neglect and simple living aspirations**). Valuation neglect and conformity both relate to undifferentiation, and agents find themselves in a situation where they have to establish a balance between their own personal interests and valuing

different aspects of conformity while enhancing their social status according to the rules established by the community – neglect for high living standard and the importance given to social status and a 'honourable' living.

Valuation neglect shows the extent to which the dispositions of slum dwellers to strive for further opportunities are limited by their own interpretation of their situation. Formulating value judgments about a certain life or another, or about a certain type of activity or another, demonstrates the narrowness of the space for agency within which opportunities are assessed: *"There is a good community spirit. No social class as such, everyone is struggling the same", "Everyone in this slum is similar, good clothing and good food is enough to live a simple and happy life"* – it is therefore likely that some of the possibilities, opportunities, are neglected as part of the activity of choosing a valuable life.

The different views expressed by agents during interviews demonstrate the distinction made between intentions and the motivation to comply with norms, as respondents constantly oscillate between statements fitting in the first category (individual intentions) or the second category (motivation to comply). The combined existence of individual intentions and motivation to comply with the behaviour of others is therefore a constantly re-negotiated equilibrium between individual needs and preferences, and the incentive to abide by and replicate the choices of other agents. As a result, reproductive processes function as stable patterns for sequences of activities which are being routinely enacted (Sindzingre 2007), and norms perpetuate and coordinate behaviours through the repetition of types of behaviours that are deemed acceptable by a social group.

Micro-level structure #2: Squatters' representations regarding squatting, landlessness and the city

The evidence collected on squatters' representations also demonstrates that micro-level structures convey instructions on specific behaviours related to their status of illegal occupants of the city space, in accordance with Sperber's definitional approach to norms¹²⁰. These micro-level structures can be framed under three categories: the urban-level narrative and myths relating to 'fake' landlessness; the narrative around the government as solely responsible for the situation of urban squatters; and the discourse around landlessness due to adverse conditions, granting squatters a status of 'legal' poor.

¹²⁰ According to Sperber (2000) normative systems exist as entities of their own. Social norms include sets of beliefs which are structuring beliefs: they are meta-beliefs or meta-representations. These representations have a deontic form, and convey instructions on representations and specific behaviours (Sperber 2000). The structuring beliefs mentioned by Sperber are the normative beliefs/ subjective norms defined as part of the conceptual framework.

	intention to perform a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs)	motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs)
Urban-level narrative and myths relating to 'fake' landlessness	<p>intention to be recognised as a genuine slum dweller with no other choice than living illegally in squatting areas of Kathmandu</p> <p><i>There is a good cooperation between the dwellers. People help; they collect money from others, for sick people or for funerals. (...)</i></p> <p><i>Otherwise everyone is similar, although the government should do a proper investigation of who is actually poor in this community. I think all the government has is fake data, they should come and see for themselves that everyone is poor here.</i> (son, male, 23, skilled construction worker)</p>	<p>motivation to comply with the urban-level narrative of 'fake' landlessness; shared beliefs around the idea some squatters are exploiting contested urban city spaces in order to get access to urban land vs. genuine urban squatters struggling with difficult living conditions in squatting areas as they have no other choice</p> <p><i>Who has the right to be where? (...) Especially since some families have land/possessions elsewhere in Kathmandu, and they have reserved their land here, waiting for the government to give them job titles.</i> (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)</p>
The government as solely responsible for the situation	<p>intention to legalise one's living situation in the squatting areas</p> <p><i>If the government would allow us to stay here five years or more, we would start running the shop again. But there is no certainty.</i> (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)</p>	<p>motivation to comply with the shared narrative that the government is responsible for the situation of squatters; use of 'we' when dwellers describe themselves as victims of the government's inadequate strategy in squatting areas</p> <p><i>Several times, the government has come to destroy slum areas. (...) Of course when there are elections, the government leaves us alone.</i> (head, male, 60, mechanics)</p>
Landlessness due to adverse conditions; squatters as 'legally' poor	<p>intention to claim benefits from a 'formal' and 'legal' landlessness status</p> <p><i>We move to Kathmandu 19 years ago. We come from a village in Rautahat. A landslide took the land away and the fields were gone. Some of my family members died. So I left with a sukumbasi [landless] certificate, as a proof that I did not have any land in my village anymore. The mayor made it for me.</i> (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)</p>	<p>compliance with others' behaviours regarding the use of formal documentation relating to landlessness; collective strategy of claiming a special status vs. the 'fake' landless</p> <p><i>Who has the right to be where? (...) Especially since some families have land/possessions elsewhere in Kathmandu, and they have reserved their land here, waiting for the government to give them job titles.</i> (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)</p>

There are different approaches to the slum 'function' according to the individual intentions of slum dwellers as they appropriate the space to themselves, and according to the norm established by the Thapathali community regarding landlessness and which claims the 'legally' poor are entitled to base on their status. The urban-level narrative relating to 'fake' landlessness constructs specific representations as to how slum dwellers are inclined to believe that they were made landless due to adverse conditions, and therefore 'legally' poor by being

given 'formal' landlessness documentation (**Landlessness due to adverse conditions; squatters as 'legally' poor**). The individual intentions align with the motivation to comply with the established belief that 'genuine' urban squatters struggle with difficult living conditions and have no other choice but to settle in squatting areas as they do not have land in the rural areas.

The individual intention is nonetheless about distancing oneself from the narrative around 'fake' landlessness and shared beliefs around the idea some squatters are exploiting contested urban city spaces in order to get access to urban land by occupying empty city spaces (**Urban-level narrative and myths relating to 'fake' landlessness**). It follows that competing narratives exist within the slum area as to who, in the Thapathali community, is contributing to the external representation that 'fake' landless households 'hide' in the slum area. Compliance with others' behaviours regarding the use of formal documentation relating to landlessness is therefore serving the individual interests of some households who follow the collective strategy of claiming a special status. The use of 'we' when dwellers describe themselves as victims of the government's inadequate strategy in squatting areas (tolerated occupation versus eviction) therefore uncovers various realities among the sub-groups within the community (**The government as solely responsible for the situation**), whereby the question of "*who has the right to be where?*" (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home) is answered differently by agents belonging to the same squatting community. It follows that individual agency is not solely related to the individual intentions described by Ajzen, but also to the extent to which agents can navigate within the established norms to find reasons for making decisions that serves them best. As such, these micro-level structures convey instructions on specific behaviours – instructions which are used by agents to legitimise their behaviours.

Micro-level structure #3: Narratives around migration, settlement history and eviction events

The micro-level structures that influence agents' decision pathways are also related to the migration history of agents and where they come from in terms of area, pathway to the city and norms that they shared in the rural areas. At the community level, the interviews showed the existence of a shared belief that expectations agents had before migrating to the city were not met ("*it did not happen*"), and individuals tend to comply with others' narrative about unrealised expectations, shifting their motivations towards settling for lower aspirations and coping with the present situation. The migration- and eviction-related micro-level structures that influence agents' decisions can be framed under four categories: the migration potentialities versus fate/ destiny; the return migration strategies; the narrative of 'being back to the same' after the eviction; and the 'before'/'after' the eviction events as a turning point revealing uncertainty about the future.

The motivation to comply with the 'non-return' norm reinforces agents' discourse about the idea that returning to the rural areas would imply an acknowledgment of aborted life plans in the capital city (**Migration potentialities versus fate/ destiny**). By standing by the narrative that migration was a lifetime decision, slum dwellers found a form of recognition from their peers in the community that they all share a common fate and that the idea of a 'failed' migration should not

overtake the willingness to strive to find oneself a situation in the capital city – at least in the discourse exchange between the squatters and their extended family living in the rural areas. As such, the normative beliefs of the Thapathali community result in the creation of a behavioural poverty trap, whereby agents reinforce each other's belief that their living conditions are low but should not be shared with their peers living in the rural areas, or lead to alternative strategies such as moving back to the villages (**Return migration strategies**).

	intention to perform a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs)	motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs)
Migration potentialities versus fate/destiny	<p>intention to escape a pre-determined pathway; migration reasons of changing one's life opportunities</p> <p><i>When I first came here, I expected I could get a good job and educate my children. But none of this happened, I was too uneducated, I didn't find a good job and I have no money for my children's education. It is a vicious circle.</i> (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)</p>	<p>shared belief that expectations were not met; 'it did not happen'; collective belief around fate and destiny, around the idea that agents' socio-economic conditions were pre-determined</p> <p><i>Coming here, we thought we could save some money. But it did not happen.</i> (head, male, 30, street vendor)</p>
Return migration strategies	<p>intention to return to rural living conditions after expectations and aspirations did not realise in the capital city</p>	<p>motivation to comply with the 'non-return' norm; shared belief that returning to the rural areas implies acknowledgment of aborted life plans in the capital city; idea of a 'failed' migration strategy</p> <p><i>We moved from Banepa. It was difficult there; we had no land. But when people move, they do not return.</i> (head, male, 45, factory worker)</p>
Narrative of 'being back to the same'	<p>intention to ease out the tensions with other households after the eviction</p> <p><i>The issue is that there is jealousy. I was able to build a house here and people got jealous. People were gossiping. Now we're all back to being the same.</i> (head, male, 33, skilled construction worker)</p>	<p>compliance with the general discourse of feeling at the edge of the city fabric; 'being back to the same' situation of illegality and limited opportunities; imitative behaviours around undifferentiated strategies as the eviction cleared off the advantageous financial situations of some households compared to others (from differentiation to undifferentiation)</p>

intention to cope with the post-eviction situation using individual resources and waiting for opportunities

Before the eviction and before the government came to destroy our houses, I had invested in a solid house (...). But now it's all gone. I went to a protest, a demonstration after the eviction, but nothing positive happened. My family living the village helped a bit, they sent money and food. (head, female, 40, handicraft work from home)

motivation to comply with a general behaviour of passivity and 'waiting' for the government to regularise the situation; collective strategy of occupying the land after the eviction and pressuring the government to come with an alternative solution

If the government would allow us to stay here five years or more, we would start the shop again. But there is no certainty. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

Simultaneously, squatters in Thapathali comply among themselves with the general discourse of feeling at the edge of the city fabric, and 'being back to the same' situation of illegality and limited opportunities after the eviction took place (**Narrative of 'being back to the same'**). From this situation, imitative behaviours around undifferentiated strategies as the eviction cleared off the advantageous financial situations of some households compared to others re-establishes the (relatively) 'comforting' environment of sharing similar living conditions within the slum community. As such the community finds a way to align individual motivation (or lack of) with normative beliefs through the collective effort of trying to make sense of events that did not make sense (tolerated occupation versus eviction). The need to build a coherent 'story' around events affecting the squatting area (**'Before'/'after' the eviction events**) is expressed in respondents' views that they feel they have more to gain from complying with a general behaviour of passivity and 'waiting' for the government to regularise their situation, which, in agents' discourse, may occur as a result of occupying the land after the eviction and pressuring the government to come with an alternative solution.

Micro-level structure #4: The community as a safety net and symbolic system

It follows from the norms around the collective effort to make sense of events and the need to re-create a sense of community spirit that agents comply with the perception that they need a safety net, although symbolic, of its own. Help and support are perceived as symbolic systems derived from the acknowledgement of a community 'inherent' solidarity. The 'safety net and symbolic system' micro-level structure can be framed under three categories: help and support as symbolic systems; community inherent solidarity; religious beliefs and dominance of Christianity within the community.

intention to perform a behaviour
(attitudes and beliefs)

slum dwellers' intentions to help each other are collectively defined; the existence of support systems relates to the motivation to comply and expected individual benefits in case of adverse events

There is a good community spirit all in all, but some people are less cooperative than others. I can't really explain what it is, you have to live it, experience it to understand it. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

intention to maintain a status quo within the slum area as opposed to 'outside' tensions relating to the government and local authorities; poverty interpreted as a shared condition from which individuals can benefit from if they support each other

motivation to comply with others' behaviours
(subjective norms or normative beliefs)

compliance with helping strategies in order to maintain the collective benefits of the community safety net; group of slum dwellers as a constrained support group, formed by necessity

Community is quite helpful. If someone gets sick, they collect money. Compared to villages, it is different here. Here people struggle more, they got through more painful experiences so that they understand each other's life and help. (head, male, 38, meat shop owner)

motivation to comply with community solidarity in order to maintain a collective feeling of combatting the 'outside' tensions

There are tensions with the government, but no tensions within the slum area. We were watching after each other's houses after the destruction. (head, male, 30, street vender)

The community of squatters can be identified as a 'constrained' support group, formed by necessity; a temporary and symbolic equilibrium in the adverse urban living conditions (**Help and support as symbolic systems**). There is an intention to maintain a status quo within the slum area as opposed to 'outside' tensions relating to the government and local authorities, while poverty is interpreted as a shared condition – condition from which individuals can 'benefit' if they support each other. As such, there is a normative belief that influences how agents behave towards each other – and maintain a status quo between their individual intentions and the symbolic equilibrium of having a functioning community where one has a voice that s/he can use and make heard (**Community inherent solidarity**). The process through which norms and beliefs become micro-level institutions therefore affects individual pathways and ways of making decisions, as pointed out by Hoff and Sen (2006) who demonstrated that, in the case of kinship norms, norms "may be an inefficient device, even if it offers protection in a context of uncertainty, as when facing economic change and modernisation. Kinship groups may lead to exit deterrence vis-à-vis their members, the outcome being what Hoff and Sen call 'collective conservatism'" (Sindzingre 2007: 31).

intention to perform a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs)	motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs)
intention to convert to Christianity for strategic reasons; healing pain and benefiting from a Christian NGO facilities and school scholarships; religion seen as a rational, utilitarian and intentional personal choice that guarantees access to better living conditions	compliance with collective behaviours of conversion in order to move away from Hindu caste discrimination; changing one's social status and perception from others based on caste; form of 'religious agency' driven by one's will to 'opt out' from caste discrimination
<i>I converted to Christianity when I arrived in Thapathali. Because we are getting facilities from the church here. (head, male, 60, mechanics)</i>	<i>Being from a low caste is not so good. But more important is that if you convert to Christianity here, children get scholarships. We have been thinking about it. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)</i>
<i>We are Hindu, but our children follow Christianity. They are sponsored by the Christian church for their tuition fees, this is why. (head, male, 42, driver/ticker counter)</i>	<i>In this community, there are almost more Christians than Hindus. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)</i>

The 'collective conservatism' aspects of the Thapathali community can be observed among the members of the community, and more specifically through the example of religious beliefs and how these are being interpreted and 'used' with the specific group of squatters (**Religious beliefs and dominance of Christianity within the community**). There is a form of compliance with the collective behaviour of conversion from Hinduism to Christianity in order to move away from Hindu caste discrimination; and the motivations to change one's social status and perception from others based on caste is an indicator of a form of 'religious agency' created by the symbolic system of the community. As explained by Weber (1958), religion shapes the economic and practical behaviours of agents as much as these behaviours shape religious doctrines and practices. Therefore, while religion provides a way of addressing the psychological needs of legitimising the more and the less fortunate, religion also entails a rationalisation of reality: religious meanings and explanations are "*derived from a systematic and rationalised 'image of the world' that determines 'from what' and 'for what' one wished to be redeemed and (...) 'could be' redeemed*" (Weber 1958: 280). It follows that religion in itself makes agents perceive the world as a world ruled by reasons and fates that can be determined.

Weber's rationalisation of reality is taken a step further here, with the *instrumentalisation* of the rationalisation of reality. Agents appear to 'shop' between different religions – therefore between different rationalisations of reality, and different fates. Driven by one's will to 'opt out' from caste discrimination, the group of slum dwellers establishes a collective understanding of how religious beliefs can help them overcome discrimination and access further benefits, illustrating how norms serving individual intentions emerge as a collective rule shared within a group of agents. A further point to be made here relates to the differences between Hinduism and other religions such as Christianity. In Hinduism, 'devotees' (or followers) appear to value an instrumental-rational approach, as part of which prescribed rituals and other practices are

associated with a particular set of agreed-upon rewards. 'Devotees', based on the interviews conducted as part of the research, also express their independence and individuality as free agents who lead their religious choices as they see fit. As such, without delving into the extensive literature related to behaviours and religious practices, modernity and tradition in religious choices as expressed in the Thapathali settlement reveal interesting patterns in terms of the reasons behind religious choice, and by extension, the room for agency in choosing how religious beliefs (and potential rewards) affect the ways of making a living: religious 'affiliation' is revisable and negotiable, with religion seen as a set of possibilities and potentialities "in which there is need for conscious self-fashioning" (Warrier 2005: 140).

Micro-level structure #5: Representations relating to 'making a living'

Representations related to making a living are similarly balanced between an expression of individual intentions and the desire to comply with norms. The 'making a living representations' micro-level structures can be framed under seven categories: isolated strategies versus conformity with activities others do for a living; narrative around work that 'comes and goes' and lack of freedom of choice; difficulties of being 'innovative' in terms of making a living; the importance of knowing 'someone' as the only way out of poverty; self-realisation achieved through auto-production; the function of caste groups as a way of explaining means of survival; and finally, the role of kinship as an institutionalised system partially dictating ways of making a living.

	intention to perform a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs)	motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs)
Isolated strategies vs. conformity to activities others do for a living	intention to make a living using common livelihood strategies; information flows about available opportunities coming from observing others	motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order not to be judged by the community; collectively-defined incentive to fit into the 'urban squatter model' and maintain homogeneity in survival strategies to ensure solidarity within the community <i>There are no role models; everyone is kind of doing the same activities. It helps with solidarity. (head, male, 60, mechanics)</i>
Work that 'comes and goes'; lack of empowerment	intention to access regular sources of income <i>I used to do construction work but stopped because it was too irregular. I was kept waiting for job opportunities. I could work for a couple of days and then had to stop because there was no work anymore. There was no longer commitment than one week of work. (spouse, female, 40, former unskilled construction worker)</i>	compliance with a general feeling that work 'comes and goes'; shared feeling of lack of empowerment over access to opportunities <i>Sometimes earnings are enough, sometimes not. It depends whether we get called for work. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)</i>

individual incentive to differentiate from others' low income-generating activities; counterbalanced by low incentives to take risks

People who think a bit more have innovative ideas, they try to start a business, and they do something different from construction work. There are opportunities for doing something new, but it is already difficult to find construction work. (head, female, 45, handicraft work from home)

Some people try new things. I have seen people breeding pigs. They sell them and make money. It is good to do this now because not so many people are doing it. (head, male, 45, factory worker)

motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order to maintain a 'status quo' around living conditions and inner-slum socio-economic differences; poverty trap

Most people are similar, as poor. Some people just manage to earn enough money every day to buy their dinner in the evening. (head, female, 40, handicraft work from home)

Most people are working in the construction sector. So it is seen as a good job by everyone. People find that this job fits them. (head, female, 30, sewing factory worker)

The information flows about available opportunities coming from observing others' activities symbolise this crossroad at which squatters found themselves as they assess their options for making a living from various sources – based on their own understanding of the environment and the knowledge shared by other squatters. Interestingly, another dimension interacts with these two information flows, and relates to the motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order to not to be judged by the community (**Isolated strategies versus conformity with activities others do for a living**). In addition to their individual intentions, agents are subjected to a collectively-defined incentive to fit into the 'urban squatter model' and maintain homogeneity in survival strategies to ensure solidarity within the community. Beyond the generation of norms among slum dwellers about what works and what does not as a livelihood strategy, there is a general feeling that work 'comes and goes', and that agents lack empowerment to access opportunities in the city (**Work that 'comes and goes' and lack of empowerment**). This is nonetheless counterbalanced by the individual intention to differentiate oneself from others' low income-generating activities, as a way to experiment new activities that may be conducive to higher earnings and better living conditions.

However, the 'status quo' around living conditions and inner-slum socio-economic differences appear to be a strong channel of influence through which collective mechanisms of undifferentiation – similar to the workings of poverty traps – perpetuate. The low incentives to take risks and try out new and innovative activities are reinforced by the motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order to share similar conditions and being guaranteed to receive help and support from the community in situations of hardship (**Difficulties of being 'innovative' in terms of making a living**). These normative beliefs around ways of making a living restrain the room for manoeuvre of individual agents, who, despite benefiting from a community of support and the regular channels of low-income opportunities, find themselves unable to make their way out of poverty through differentiating themselves and experimenting with other ways of making a living. This strengthens the idea of the existence of a poverty trap at the level of the Thapathali community, characterised by the interdependence of behaviours, the existence of self-reinforcing processes due to limited supply of public goods, creating enclaves and leading to the reproduction of poverty (Durlauf 2003). Additionally, agents are influenced by choices of others, due to learning from past choices projected on future choices (Blume and Durlauf 2000). The absence of a decisional space for agents to experiment new strategies can be interpreted as the fact that norms, on the one hand, and normative beliefs and practices on the other hand, are mutually reinforcing and generate a poverty trap, as learning processes such as trying out potentially risky activities are costly for individuals, and become ever more costly as beliefs stabilise.

Importance of knowing 'someone'; seen
as the only way out of poverty

intention to perform a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs)	motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs)
intention to access differentiated work opportunities and make one's way out of poverty independently	motivation to comply with the meta-belief that without 'outer friends' or acquaintances outside the Thapathali slum area, one cannot afford to escape poverty; internalised belief that squatters cannot make their way out of poverty without external support
	<i>People who are going to give you work are not the ones in Thapathali, you need to have better contacts than that.</i> (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)

Beyond the characterisation of poverty trap aspects emerging from slum dwellers' discourses, the individual intention to support one's living situation while ensuring self-sufficiency is expressed through the goal of having a certain margin for 'doing things yourself' (**Self-realisation achieved through auto-production**). There is a motivation to imitate self-employment strategies, which are perceived as providing the opportunity to try out new ways of making a living: slum dwellers believe that empowerment comes from the production of goods/ items/ services, and express feelings of envy around self-employment and the social status that is associated with having a set of skills you can live from.

	intention to perform a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs)	motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs)
Self-realisation through auto-production	<p>intention to support one's living situation while ensuring self-sufficiency and having a certain margin for 'doing things yourself'</p> <p><i>My father started by working in others' sewing shops in Kathmandu. One of his sister is from the village has a shop in Kathmandu, that's how he started. Fourteen years ago, he met with a person who became his partner; they started their own sewing shop. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)</i></p>	<p>motivation to imitate others' self-employment strategies; social status coming from having a set of skills</p> <p><i>I have a business, it works well, I have some cooking skills. People in the community behave well to me; there is a form of prestige about this work. (...) I learned cooking by looking at how my mother was cooking. (head, female, 35, tea shop owner)</i></p>
Function of caste groups as a way of explaining means of survival	<p>intention to legitimise one's way of making a living; explained through caste-related occupational rules; enhanced legitimacy of having a pre-established role and a defined set of skills inherited from the family</p> <p><i>I learned how to do tailoring from childhood, because it is what my family does. It is the same in my husband family. (spouse, female, 26, sewing work from home)</i></p>	<p>motivation to abide by the caste rule and religious normative system; compliance with others' behaviours regarding caste occupation as it may ease the discrimination associated to caste groups; and therefore enhanced social status</p> <p><i>He [my husband] is doing iron work, small pots made of iron. He learned the skills from his family during his childhood. That's what people from his caste do and have in terms of skills. (...) My husband has a good social status with his work because he fulfils a need in society. It has got better these days, because in the past, my husband had to hide to do his work, because it showed he is from a low caste. (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)</i></p>

intention to secure kinship support in the
eventuality of future hardship situations

motivation to comply with kinship rules as others in
the community ensure support through their
extended family who remained in the rural areas

*Kinship is still very important in someone's life, this is
not changing much. Family influence on decisions
is still very important. Like influence on marriage,
on education. (head, male, 38, meat shop owner)*

Similarly to the example of religious beliefs and how these are being interpreted and 'used' with the specific group of squatters, there is a form of compliance with the collective behaviour regarding caste occupation – as it may ease the discrimination associated to caste groups (**Function of caste groups as a way of explaining means of survival**). There is an individual intention to legitimise one's way of making a living through the legitimacy of having a pre-established role and a defined set of skills inherited from the family. Driven by one's will to 'opt out' from caste discrimination, the group of slum dwellers establishes a collective understanding of how caste groups determine occupation, which can be related to the goal of having a certain margin for 'doing things yourself', the means being the legitimacy granted by caste-determined occupations. This is another indicator of agency and how agents navigate within a set of externally-defined and internally-perpetuated norms and refine their own normative beliefs relating to occupation and caste. While caste affiliation may still be a factor of discrimination, it is not within the slum community as caste-related skills enhance the living conditions and access to opportunities of agents, especially those who are self-employed and manage to live from using their birth-determined skills inherited from the previous generations. For those who did not manage to transfer their caste-related skills to income-generating activities, the conversion to Christianity is another way of dealing with religious agency¹²¹.

Finally, the coexistence of different sub-groups within the community is a cross-cutting theme across the different micro-level structures that shape the norms, beliefs and normative beliefs – which are either shared among the community as a whole or institutionalised by a specific sub-group of agents. The different social layers through which norms are transmitted and influence individual decision-making pathways are visible through the existence of kinship rules – strongly anchored in the rural-urban networks described earlier – that ensure support through the extended family who remained in the rural areas in exchange for agents' compliance with the extended family's influence over decisions about occupation, education and marriage (**Role of kinship as an institutionalised system partially dictating ways of making a living**).

¹²¹ Refer to earlier discussion in this section: *Religious beliefs and dominance of Christianity within the community*.

Micro-level structures that influence decision-making processes: A fine balance

As exposed in this section, and based on Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, agents demonstrated that they have their own intention to perform a behaviour based on their needs and preferences (Ajzen 2007). There is for instance an individual incentive to differentiate from others' low income-generating activities, while differentiation strategies are counterbalanced by low incentives to take risks and try out new and innovative activities. Intention to migrate from rural areas in the first place is based on needs and preferences, as an intention to escape a pre-determined pathway (migration reasons related to changing one's life opportunities). The intention to succeed in sheltering one's family relates to the need to having a roof over one's head, while the agent may demonstrate his/her intention to be recognised as a genuine slum dweller with no other choice than living illegally in squatting areas of Kathmandu. These behaviours are based on **attitudes and preferences**, and mostly reflect the needs of the population of squatters as they make decisions related to making a living.

Agents also behave based on their motivation to comply with others' behaviours, known as the **subjective interpretation of norms** (Ajzen 2007). They are influenced by the choices of other agents, which are perpetuated through the existence of feedback loops (Durlauf 2002). While there is a degree of compliance with helping strategies among slum dwellers, this compliance derives from the collective choice of agents to maintain the collective benefits of the community safety net (group of slum dwellers as a constrained support group, formed by necessity; a temporary and symbolic equilibrium in the adverse urban living conditions). Beyond the individual intention to make a living using common and accessible livelihood strategies and the use of information flows about available opportunities coming from observing others' activities, evidence was found of a motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order not to be judged by the community (collectively-defined incentive to maintain homogeneity in survival strategies to ensure solidarity within the community). Similarly, the individual intention to return to rural living conditions after expectations and aspirations were not realised in the capital city is counterbalanced by the motivation to comply with the 'non-return' norm and the shared belief that returning to the rural areas implies acknowledgment of aborted life plans in the capital city.

As such, a fine balance can be observed between the intention to perform a behaviour and the motivation to comply with norms, and it may be that certain individual intentions were not expressed during the interviews or that compliance with norms was chosen as a way to present oneself to the researcher. This section nonetheless gives a detailed account of the overarching norms and social representations expressed by agents, and – to the extent that agents' narratives could be triangulated with other household members – of the influence of these norms on their individual intentions, revealing the existence of collective conservatism, beliefs that are difficult to revise and the resulting behavioural poverty trap effects.

6.2 Attitudes and normative beliefs relating to different types of 'making a living'

While attitudes/ beliefs and subjective norms have been presented in the previous section (**Section 6.1**), demonstrating the similarities and differences between individual intentions and motivations to comply with others' behaviours, the specific belief maps¹²² for different groups of slum dwellers and by main livelihood strategies are exposed in this section. Three groups were identified – slum dwellers engaged in casual work, slum dwellers being self-employed and slum dwellers engaged in regular waged activities. The purpose of the belief maps is to identify the different worldviews (or norms, that is both **attitudes/ beliefs** and **normative beliefs**) of the three groups of slum dwellers, and how these differ according to the type of livelihood strategy carried out by households while further influencing their choices.

Two dominant themes emerged across the three groups – 'work' and 'money' are recurrently mentioned by households, although the value attached to both these themes largely differ according to the type of livelihood strategy chosen by the households. Making a living is mainly perceived as being about surviving in a monetised economy, as indicated by the recurrent mentions of the terms '*financial help*', '*manage to earn*', '*out of money*', '*took debt from*', '*get a loan*' and '*family expenses*'.

Casual work: A common and accepted income-earning activity

The first and largest group of interest comprises slum dwellers engaged in casual or daily wage labour, namely unskilled construction work (**Figure 6.4**). Making a living through construction work is perceived as a flexible and easy strategy as most construction sites do not require workers to have specific construction skills and hire workers on a daily basis. Unskilled construction work is therefore seen as a convenient strategy for a fast access to cash in a commoditised economy, although permanent slum dwellers also compete with seasonal workers who temporarily migrate to Kathmandu to make money.

The daily wage is relatively low – between 250 NPR and 350 NPR; and unskilled construction workers tend to complain about the limited amount of cash they can earn through this type of living. The flexibility of daily waged activities counterbalances the low earnings, as it entails the possibility to rely on more working days when households face unexpected expenses. As shown on **Figure 6.4**, festival times and expenses related to religious celebrations are perceived as important for unskilled construction workers and their families, and high reliance on cash in the capital city makes the importance of 'showing' one's ability to celebrate these social events even

¹²² The figures present an in-depth qualitative approach to analysing slum dwellers' discourses, building upon the quantitative assessment of each actor's depiction of their daily interactions and concerns about survival. The circles represent the main themes by average size of occurrence in slum dwellers' interviews, illustrative quotes are attached to the main themes according to their recurrence in the different discourses. Red is used in places where such themes were associated with negative sentiment words and the strength of the links connecting the different sub-themes is depicted using either plain lines (strong link) or dotted lines (weak link).

more crucial for households who want to enhance their social status beyond their low occupational status.

When I run out of money, there is no other choice than relying on more hours of work, more casual labour as construction worker. (...) Construction work is both good and bad, I can go whenever I want but it is difficult work. I wish I had learned sewing or tailoring. Now I'd like to open a small shop but I have no money for doing this. (head, female, 65, unskilled construction worker)

Unskilled construction work is however perceived as a difficult and irregular type of income-generating activity, as earnings are low and not always secured, depending on the availability of work on construction sites. Construction work is also a strategy that entails working on different construction sites that often turn out to be located far away from the Thapathali slum area.

Sometimes earnings are enough, sometimes not. It depends whether we get called for work. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

My husband still does construction work, but it is difficult to find a regular position. (spouse, female, 50, domestic worker)

Daily wage activities are therefore a relatively flexible strategy for making a living, although network and contacts play a significant role in securing one's work position on a construction site. Accessing construction work opportunities is largely based on 'being known'/having 'heard about' and recommendations colleagues, friends or the extended family can provide to the worker.

Despite its apparent functioning as an 'open-entry' system, unskilled construction work is a competitive labour market – the access to which increasingly depends on being recommended and knowing other construction workers. As differentiation between a large pool of unskilled migrant workers cannot be made on skill sets, the selection process is more and more based on having good recommendations and a solid social network.

Social networking is more and more important. They only hire the known ones. Skilful people are doing good. It is more difficult with rural skills. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

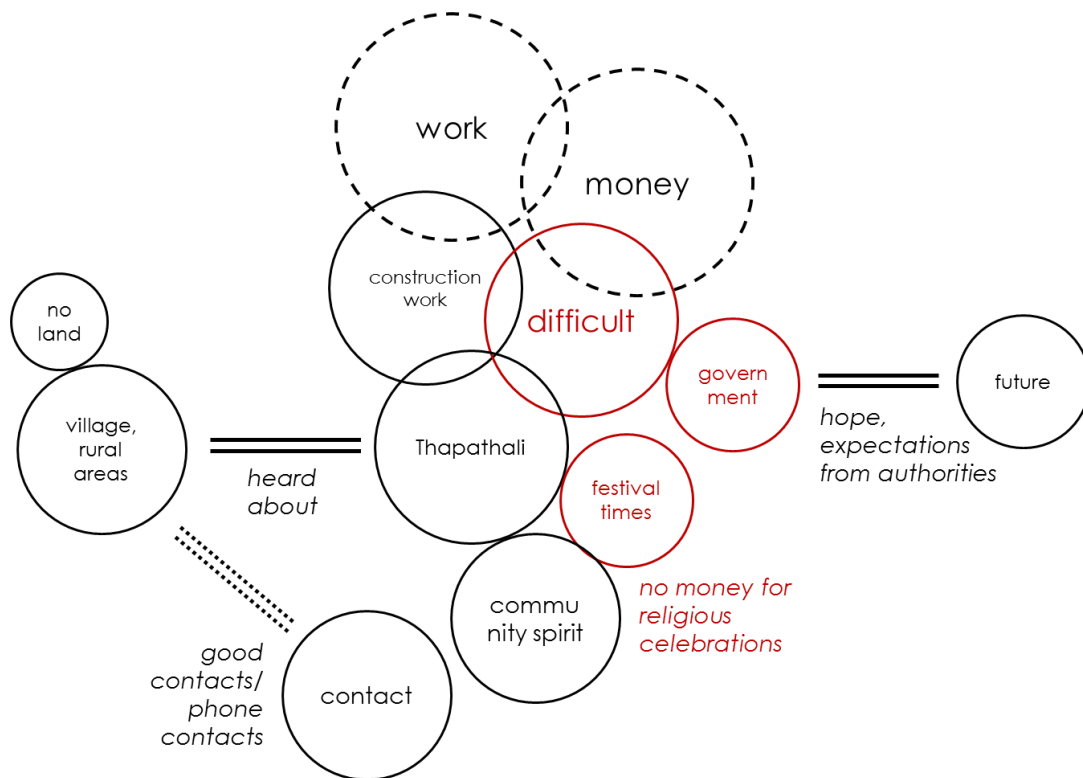
Having good relationships with people with whom you're working is important. You need to know people who do the same kind of job as you, otherwise they cannot help you, they don't know about your skills and they cannot recommend you. (son, male, 23, skilled construction worker)

Having construction skills is therefore a significant asset for getting access to skilled construction work and being able to secure higher income-generating work. Acquiring skills is part of a differentiation strategy that usually ensure better living conditions, although skilled positions on construction sites are limited as well.

I was doing construction work at first, then I started to work in a mechanics workshop and got engine skills. That was back in Hetauda, then I came to Kathmandu and started to work as mechanics on construction sites. (head, male, 33, skilled construction worker)

I would like to be a painter, but it is difficult to learn and it is difficult to find as a job compared to normal construction work. (head, male, 52, unskilled construction worker)

Figure 6.4 Belief map – casual workers



Unskilled construction work is therefore perceived as a 'good enough' strategy; a difficult work that requires physical strength and provides only enough to survive in a commoditised economy. The way slum dwellers categorise this livelihood strategy as 'difficult' is mostly related to the physical component of construction work, and how the community perceives those who have to use their physical condition in order to make a living. Both positive and negative perceptions coexist regarding physical work, as the homogeneity of livelihood strategies at the level of the Thapathali community makes construction work a common, unavoidable and accepted income-earning activity.

Construction work is not so good for social status. But it is good enough to support the family. (spouse, female, 35, unskilled construction worker)

In Thapathali, most people do the same jobs. (...) Most people are working in the construction sector. So it is seen as a good job by everyone. People find that this job fits them. (head, female, 30, sewing factory worker)

There are discriminations related to being a woman. In domestic work for instance. In construction work, because women cannot carry as heavy loads as men. They get sent home more easily than men. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

The likelihood of being engaged in construction work when living in squatting areas entails the absence of differentiation and imitative behaviours. Unskilled construction workers are similar, and slum dwellers' discourses unveil the idea that workers are 'undistinguishable' – 'a worker among others' – when they go and look for construction work opportunities on construction sites.

When it was about finding construction work, we used to go with friends from here [Thapathali]. We went around the city to find construction sites. (head, female, 30, sewing factory worker)

Everyone has to do a manual job anyway, so incomes are very similar. (head, male, 43, factory worker)

Unskilled casual wage workers also perceive their situation as a low-value situation, and tend to compare their living and working conditions to other households engaged in different types of income-generating activities. Frustration with low earnings and difficult working conditions entails a certain idealisation of other types of living.

Office work is good, you can get monthly payment and it is secured and certain. (spouse, female, 58, unskilled construction worker)

Being a security guard is good for social status. You get paid well and you only have 8 hours of duty and then you're free. (head, male, 52, unskilled construction worker)

A feeling of disempowerment and lack of agency over one's life is shared among casual workers, and is illustrated by the high expectations unskilled workers have from the government about sorting out their situation in the future. Unskilled construction workers visit construction sites to find work opportunities, but the unskilled labour force is increasingly being contracted on a daily basis by recruiters coming directly to the Thapathali slum area, resulting in construction workers perceiving themselves as a cheap, available and 'gathered in a single urban space'/stigmatised group of low wage workers.

The company actually came to Thapathali to recruit people, and they went to other low housing areas in Kathmandu to find people. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

People come here to hire us, but since everyone is doing the same, not all get a chance to participate. Some people register their names first, so it creates tensions. (head, female, 45, handicraft work from home)

Then I got sick, and I shifted to construction work. People came here to recruit us. (head, male, 60, mechanics)

In construction work, we get replaced by machines. It is unskilled work. (head, male, 27, catering)

Self-employment: Learning on one's own, sense of achievement and caste-related occupations

The self-employed constitute the second largest group of slum dwellers identified in the Thapathali slum area (**Figure 6.5**). Unlike the casual working group, the self-employed cover a wide range of activities and sectors, from shop owners, small businesses (clothes, sewing), handicraft work carried out at home, street vending activities and retailing. A first observation from the qualitative interviews conducted with slum dwellers from this group relates to a shared feeling of pride and empowerment over being a self-employed worker. The emphasis on 'learning on one's own' and managing to make a living despite adverse living conditions and little initial capital illustrates the sense of personal achievement the self-employed share from their diverse activities.

I moved from Sarlhai 25 years ago, I moved to do business. I don't have land in the village, almost no family. My brother also moved to Kathmandu. (...) When I first moved, I knew no one. I lived in Kalimati in a rented room, for 2000 Rs per month. I had little money when I arrived. I learned how to do business by looking at how people were doing it. I learned by myself. (head, male, 50, grocery retailer)

My husband is now self-employed, he has his own meat shop. It has been six months now. He used to work in another meat shop. Then he got a loan (40 000 Rs from son in law) and managed to start his own shop. He knew how to do it. (...) We didn't have any connexion when we first moved here. We had to find a room and jobs by ourselves. (spouse, female, 37, meat shop helper)

In terms of skills, what you need for business is good management skills. (...) You also need to diversify what you're doing, try new things when old ones do not work anymore or are not profitable. (head, male, 50, grocery retailer)

Rich people might not be happier than me. I have a business, it works well, I have some cooking skills. People in the community behave well to me, there is a form of prestige about working in this sector. (head, female, 35, tea shop owner)

Beyond individuals' sense of empowerment and feelings of agency, self-employment strategies are nevertheless highly embedded in the social structure and cultural order of the squatting community. The replication of caste occupational norms can be observed for self-employed workers who tend to engage in activities relating to the skill set they acquire from belonging to a specific caste group. Caste-related skills range from trading skills, sewing skills, handicraft skills, to more specific skill sets relating to preparing and selling meat for instance. A degree of legitimacy is attached to most of these skill sets (e.g. legitimacy to prepare meat), which can be derived from the traditional caste divisions by which social and professional functions in society are defined. When migrating to the city centres, rural migrants tend to adapt their inherited skill set to the range of urban employment opportunities available to them. The sense of achievement relating to making a living through traditional skill sets is significant for these groups, as rural migrants perceive their occupation as fulfilling a need in the micro-level society of squatting areas. By adapting their aspirations and caste functions to the requirements of the

urban labour market, the self-employed get a dual sense of achievement from finding their own legitimate ways of making a living and managing to fit in the urban fabric.

Working in a meat shop is not exactly considered as a good occupation. It is just for sustaining the family. My husband is doing this job because he knows how to do it. That's what he knows how to do. (...) People from Thapathali order meat from us for festival times, we do not feel bad for doing this job. (spouse, female, 37, meat shop helper)

He [my husband] is doing iron work, small pots made of iron. He learned the skills from his family during his childhood. That's what people from his caste do and have in terms of skills. (...) My husband has a good social status with his work because he fulfils a need in society, based on his caste. It has got better these days, because in the past, my husband had to hide to do his work, because it shows he is low caste. Nowadays, other people are doing it as well, there is less discrimination. (head, female, 60, handicraft work from home)

I learned how to do tailoring from childhood, because it is what my family does. It is the same in my husband family. (spouse, female, 26, sewing work from home)

Birth-determined profession and status is therefore considered as an important aspect for livelihood strategies as the urban context offers limited recognition for urban squatters with low education levels and limited skills. In spite of the difficulties faced by low caste groups regarding discrimination, the caste-related skill set is for the self-employed an insurance against unemployment in a community where workers have very similar characteristics and working capacities – demonstrating the precarious balance between on the one hand claiming one's low caste status and related skills, and on the other hand moving away from traditional caste roles and associated discrimination.

My family's occupation is sewing, you know, you fix others' clothes and they give you food. (...) Sewing is not too bad because people acknowledge you have a skill. (...) One should learn one skill in life, this is what leads to success. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

Self-employment strategies tend to be more closely embedded into family networks compared to other livelihood strategies, which makes the need for other types of social networks less important as the self-employed mostly rely on extended family and caste group networks. Family members are considered an important asset when setting up one's small business or street vending activities, and unpaid family workers are a significant source of labour for the slum dwellers. Self-employment is therefore a flexible opportunity of informal employment for a household, which can choose to engage part or all of its working force in collectively-run family businesses.

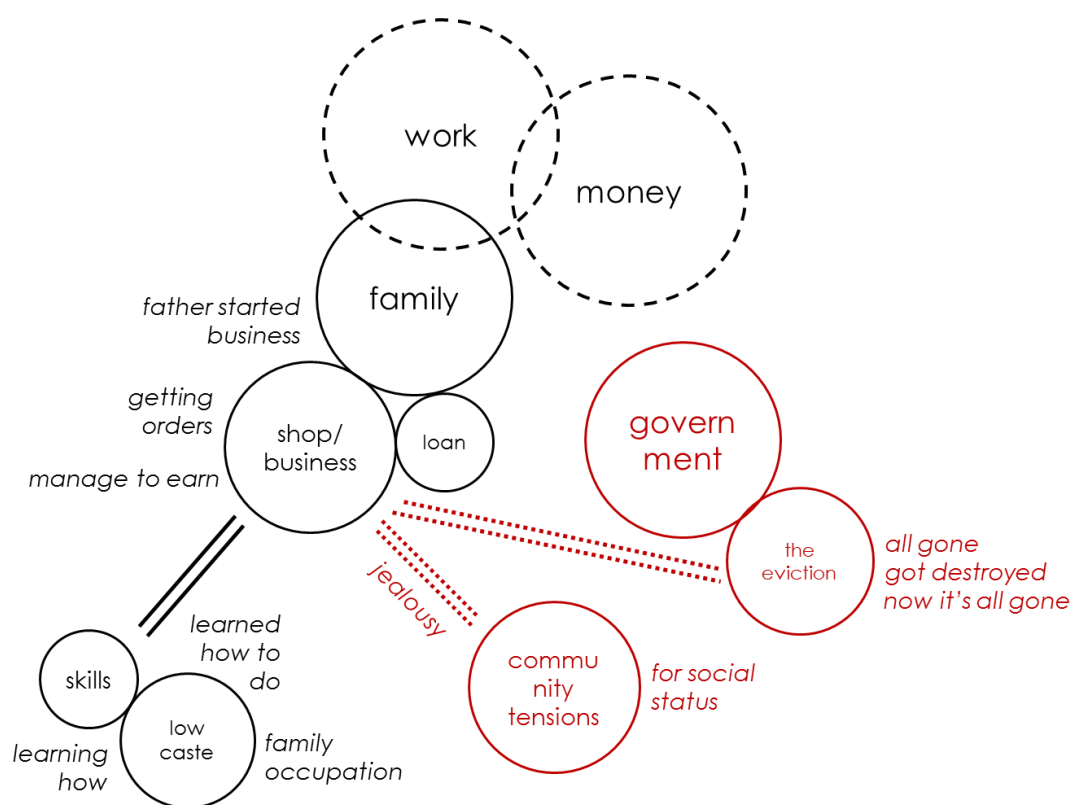
My son and I work together, even though he is married and lives in a different part of Kathmandu. I sell ready-made clothes in the street, I carry a package on my shoulders. We are street vendors. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

I can't do construction work anymore because of my health. This is why I work with my sister in the family business. (head, female, 40, handicraft work from home)

I run this tea shop with my family; my mother and my two daughters help. (head, female, 35, tea shop owner)

My parents own a sewing shop as well, and my mother and my cousin both help him. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

Figure 6.5 Belief map – self-employed workers



The family network is however of limited use for starting larger business activities, and tends to be associated with other constraints such as limited insurance of sufficient earnings to be shared among all of the household members when households rely on one single livelihood strategy.

I think education is very important for livelihoods. The family as well, more than friends. But getting a job through a network of family and friends, it is only for small jobs. To do a big business, it is not about relatives but education. (head, male, 43, street clothes vendor)

I came with the children and started construction work. I tried to have a teashop at some point, but I was not earning enough money. As I could not pay the rent anymore, I came to Thapathali. (head, female, 40, handicraft work from home)

Work strategies put in place by the self-employed present many drawbacks related to informality and the lack of secure assets. Street vending for instance is regulated by the local authorities who have been chasing vendors from the streets and confiscating their goods. Beyond being on the edge of informality, self-employment also entails a certain level of uncertainty as

households largely depend on market fluctuations and their ability to sell products to clients they have identified. As a result, self-employment implies exposing oneself to higher risks compared to casual work opportunities.

Street vending is becoming more and more difficult. The government and municipality do not let us do business. (head, male, 30, street vendor)

Handicraft is good for the social status. It is good for people who have to stay at home for the whole day because they have to look after children. But it is uncertain. I do not get orders all the time and sometimes I don't earn money at all. (head, female, 40, handicraft work from home)

Street vending is perceived as a good job, because you can do it anytime you like. It is flexible. It is better to have an independent business like this. (...) Getting a loan for this is difficult though. I started a small tea shop in Thapathali some while ago, but the children stole my supplies. (...) I also have the feeling I don't have the right skills for starting a business. (head, male, 45, factory worker)

Being highly dependent on family loans when starting their small-scale businesses, the self-employed fear the threat of eviction more than other dwellers as their assets are often stored in their dwellings and their houses used as working spaces. Additionally, by investing in their housing and working spaces, self-employed slum dwellers tend to trigger jealousy from other community members as sturdy brick houses built by the self-employed used to be seen as a sign of success and differentiation before the eviction took place, creating community tensions.

We used to have a shop for the community, in Thapathali, but it got destroyed 6 months ago. (spouse, female, 35, tea shop owner)

Until the house got destroyed, my father thought he was successful. Now he is reconsidering. We lost a lot during the eviction, things got crushed and buried under the bricks. My father had taken a loan to make a proper house, and now it's all gone. (head, male, 50, sewing shop owner)

Sometimes people get jealous about what I'm doing, because our family earns money compared to other families. There are differences, and tensions. (head, female, 35, tea shop owner)

Regular work: Security and certainty of earnings, but similar living conditions

The third group of slum dwellers living in the Thapathali community shares common features due to the fact they are engaged in regular waged activities (**Figure 6.6**). These range from working in a factory, helping in offices (administrative tasks or courier), being a seller in shops or supermarkets, being a security guard (shops or guarding wealthy families' houses), being a plumber or a mechanic.

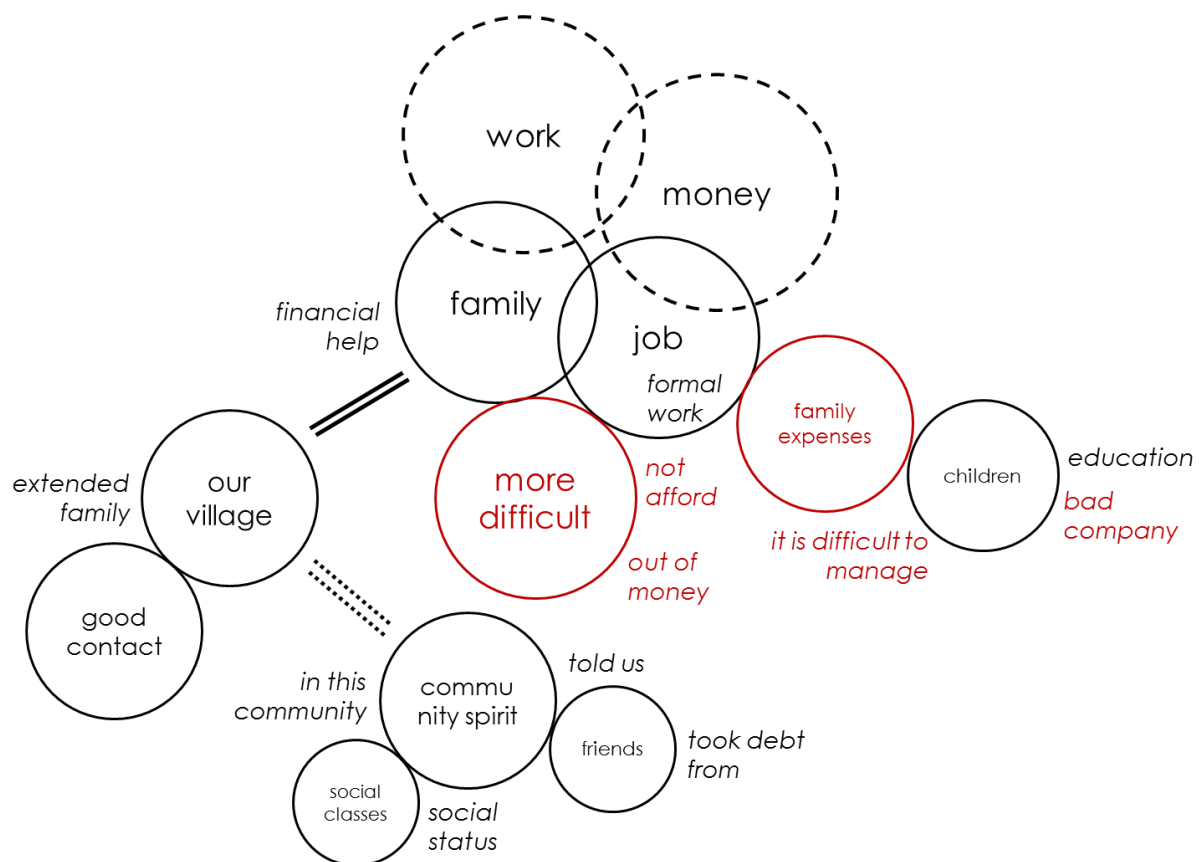
Regular wage workers are a smaller share of the total Thapathali squatting population and a relatively heterogeneous group in terms of earnings and main type of occupation. In

comparison with other types of occupation, regular wage workers tend to consider the security and certainty of earnings as an important factor for engaging in regular work and are generally regarded as successful individuals in the community considering the difficulty to secure a regular position.

Being a security guard is good for social status. You get paid well and you only have 8 hours of duty and then you're free. (head, male, 52, unskilled construction worker)

I used to do construction work but stopped because it was too irregular. I was kept waiting for job opportunities. I could work for a couple of days and then had to stop because there was no work anymore. There was no longer commitment than one week of work. (spouse, female, 40, unskilled construction worker)

Figure 6.6 Belief map – regular wage workers



However, the regularity of earnings does not appear to be correlated with apparent differences in terms of living conditions, and regular wage workers tend to complain about the burden of household expenses. As shown on the belief map above, households assess their financial situation as "difficult to manage" and are – in some cases – recipients of extended family financial support or taking loans from friends and colleagues. The emphasis on social status is nevertheless more important than for other living strategies and illustrates the idea that representations around the benefits of being a regular wage worker are not consistent with the

actual situation experienced by regular workers. A potential explanation for the financial difficulties experienced by households engaged in regular waged activities can be found in the actual 'informality' of regular paid jobs, which in most cases are not regulated by formal contractual agreements between the employer and the employee.

Now I work in a flex board factory. I found this job through my brother and his friends. It is not always easy. Some bosses are not good, they do not pay you for your work. Or they pay you little by little. (head, male, 43, factory worker)

The aspect of 'regularity' is therefore confined to the expectations of having a secured position, although the security of these positions is only guaranteed by an oral agreement with the employer. Factory workers for instance get paid on an irregular basis despite their regular working arrangements, and this pattern can be found in almost all sectors of the Nepalese industry, reflecting the pitfalls of the absence of a proper formal employment market in the country.

6.3 Decision analysis: Investigating patterns in responses to rules and norms relating to making a living

After presenting a comprehensive mapping of the norms held by different groups disaggregated by their main livelihood strategies (**Section 6.2**), along with the attitudes/ beliefs and subjective norms expressed more generally within the Thapathali community (**Section 6.1**), the following step of the analysis (**Section 6.3**) is to highlight the reasons given by slum dwellers to explain their ways of making a living – while contextualising these reasons within the wider set of subjective norms shared at the level of the Thapathali community.

Using findings from the previous sections of this chapter (individual intentions, motivations to comply with others' behaviours, and norms disaggregated by livelihood strategies), decision analysis is presented following the identification of step-by-step processes (refer to **Chapter 1**), from the type of information about available alternatives to preferences and goals individuals set for themselves while responding to institutionalised community-level rules and norms. Decision analysis breaks the decision process into a number of steps, as outlined below:

- **information**; knowledge about the decision, the effects of its alternatives and the perceived probability of each alternative
- **alternatives**; possibilities one has to choose from, including identified existing alternatives versus alternatives developed to fix a situation
- **criteria**; characteristics or requirements that each alternative possesses to a greater or lesser extent
- **goals**; overall objective individuals want to achieve

- **value and preferences;** how desirable a particular outcome is considering the preferences and their hierarchy for the decision-maker
- **type of rationality;** *instrumental rationality* (reason is not the motivation, only the outcome matters), *Kantian rationality* (reason alone can stand as a motivation to act, categorical imperatives and value/ belief-oriented rationality), *collectively-led rationality* (traditional or conventional rationality, ingrained habituation and imitation)
- **type of decision-making process;** *optimising* (documenting as many alternatives as possible and choosing the very best), *satisficing* (first satisfactory alternative chosen rather than the best alternative), *maximax* (evaluating alternatives based on their maximum possible payoff, risk-taking type of behaviour), *maximin* (worst possible outcome of each decision is considered, highest minimum is chosen based on guaranteed return of the decision)
- **degree of decision embeddedness;** collective versus individual endeavours; tendency to comply, imitate or differentiate

Step #1: Information about the ways of making a living

information; knowledge about the decision, the effects of its alternatives and the perceived probability of each alternative

casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
shared knowledge among urban dwellers and new migrants that construction sites are hiring casual workers on a daily basis; high chances of accessing work in a flexible way	family setting/ social network as informational assets for starting a new enterprise/ street vending activities	shared knowledge among urban dwellers and new migrants that regular wage positions are difficult to secure
easy-to-find work opportunity by walking to construction sites and getting daily contracts	easy-to-start business with a lump sum/ small initial capital from family/ loans	importance of social network to get information about regular waged jobs
private contractors visiting slum areas to hire daily workers on construction sites	probability of success of home-based enterprise deemed high by slum dwellers who contemplate starting their own business by looking at others' successes	required recommendations from former colleagues or family in order to access regular work
shared information that skills are not required; opportunities available to men and women	capacity to secure goods and commodities limited in unsecured squatting areas (eviction, temporary dwellings with no lock)	skills required for regular positions such as plumbing, mechanics, security guard or office helper
location of construction work opportunities is variable; in most cases work can be found from walking/cycling distance from Thapathali	shared feeling that manual/technical or business skills are required in order to ensure business success	probability of securing a regular waged position is low without proper recommendations/ family connections

Information about ways of making a living is mostly available to agents through the daily interactions they have with other slum dwellers and the knowledge they gained from previous rural migrants visiting in the villages. Self-employment is an activity agents associate positive value to, as the most successful households in the community are the ones who run a small-scale enterprise and benefit from a high social status as they possess manual/technical or business skills – despite the shared knowledge among urban dwellers and new migrants that street vending is more risky compared to other types of activities due to the attitudes of local authorities. When asked about their knowledge of the ways of making a living that are available to them, slum dwellers tend to have a comprehensive and detailed picture of the different requirements, skills, assets and networks needed for establishing oneself in one of the three types of income-earning activities. While casual work is deemed an easy-to-find work opportunity, with high chances of accessing work in a flexible way and with opportunities being available to both men and women, regular wage work is perceived as being more difficult to secure, requiring a specific social network, recommendations from former colleagues or family, and skills such as plumbing, mechanics or office helper skills.

Step #2: Alternatives for making a living

alternatives; possibilities one has to choose from, identified existing alternatives vs. alternatives developed to fix a situation

casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
casual work often perceived as the only alternative for unskilled workers without a network/ connections	self-employment as an existing alternative related to family occupation and social capital; caste-related skill set makes self-employment an available alternative	secured alternative to other types of strategies as earnings are regular and assured
feeling of disempowerment/ dispossession regarding lack of alternatives; dispositions of unskilled casual workers to strive for further opportunities are limited by their own interpretation of their situation; internalised value judgments about aspirations	slum dwellers choose to engage in due to family influence (birth-determined profession and status)	financial difficulties experienced by households engaged in regular waged activities make them consider alternatives; although more risky strategies to engage in less regular and secured activities are usually dismissed in the absence of initial economic/ social capital
lack of creativity/ risk-taking strategies to engage in other activities without a set of skills/ social capital	self-employed as an alternative developed to fix situations of unemployment within the household as unpaid family members have the ability to contribute to a family business and increasing the profitability of small-scale enterprises	
	self-employment as a risky alternative compared to other types of strategies, requiring initial investment and limited guarantees of returns/benefits in a context of informality (local authorities and measures against the illegality of street vending)	

The alternatives available to agents engaged in casual work are usually fairly limited. Without skills and/ or social capital, unskilled construction workers experience a feeling of disempowerment/ dispossession regarding the lack of alternative income-generating activities; and the dispositions of unskilled casual workers to strive for further opportunities are limited by their own interpretation of their situation (internalised value judgments about aspirations). By contrast, the self-employed benefit from a caste-related skill set which makes self-employment an available alternative slum dwellers choose to engage with due to their family influence (birth-determined profession and status). Unpaid family members have the ability to contribute to a family business and increase the profitability of small-scale enterprises. In the case of self-employment, other alternatives imply to renounce to the benefits related to one's low caste status and related skills, but also contrast with the alternative benefits related to moving away from traditional caste roles and associated discrimination outside the community.

Step #3: Criteria of alternative ways of making a living

criteria: characteristics or requirements that each alternative possesses to a greater or lesser extent

casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
low occupational status; limited social status as hours worked are long; low earnings	high occupational status; risk-taking and innovative strategies of the self-employed	high occupational status; linked to security and regularity of earnings
flexibility of casual work compared to other strategies; ability to work more during hardship periods	flexibility in choosing to engage part or all of a household working force (including children) in collectively-run family businesses	regarded as successful individuals in the community considering the difficulty to secure a regular position
ability to mobilise household members when more cash is required	combatting caste discrimination and stigma by getting recognition for caste-related skills	
irregularity of earnings as slum dwellers have to identify new construction sites on a regular basis	self-employment does not ensure regular earnings nor prevent issues related to health for handicraft workers	
competition with skilled construction workers; between men and women (lower earnings for women); between slum dwellers who are recommended by colleagues/ friends/ family	high reliance on extended family money and social connections before securing clients/ contracts	

As a result, the criteria – characteristics or requirements that each alternative possesses – are a crucial aspect of the decisional processes followed by agents. While being self-employed grants a good social status, agents are further inclined to make use of their caste-related skill set as a way of combatting caste discrimination and stigma by getting recognition for caste-related skills – rather than choosing to move away from traditional caste roles and associated discrimination outside the community. Similarly, regular wage workers tend to de-value other alternatives based on the fact that they are regarded as successful individuals in the community considering the difficulty to secure a regular position – in spite of the financial difficulties experienced by households engaged in regular waged activities. The temptation to opt for more risky strategies, engage in less regular and secured activities are also usually dismissed in the absence of initial economic/ social capital.

Step #4: Goals of making a living

goals: overall objective individuals want to achieve

casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
importance of accessing the cash economy and being able to afford clothing and food (recent migrants' first encounter with urban living conditions)	maintaining good family connections by engaging in family businesses	securing regular and steady income
sending money home if possible	social status and recognition from community for being innovative/ entrepreneurial	social stature sought through regular/ more formal types of activities
goal of maintaining one's social status through securing enough earnings to be able to celebrate festivals and religious events	differentiating one's strategy from others to ensure higher earnings compared to more traditional activities	idea that receiving a regular wage resembles upper social classes' way of making a living

Step #5: Values and preferences related to making a living

value and preferences: how desirable a particular outcome is considering the preferences and their hierarchy for the decision-maker

casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
'honourable' and hard way of making a living; feeling of achievement when undertaking difficult physical tasks	feeling of pride and empowerment from 'producing' (handicraft, sewing, tailoring)	preference for risk-averse type of activities
limited recognition of physical work value; low social status in community; but 'good enough' strategy for those who do not have skills	personal valuation of 'learning on one's own' and managing to make a living despite adverse living conditions and little initial capital	preference for security and certainty of earnings as an important factor for engaging in regular work
preference for flexibility/ insecurity of earnings over fixed type of work	preference for fitting into the social structure; replication of occupational norms derived from traditional caste divisions	valuing middle and upper social classes' ways of making a living

The value and preferences differ from agents' goals to the extent that they may not refer to a specific objective that agents wish to achieve as part of their way of making a living but rather 'value' the extent to which these specific objectives are desirable considering the preferences and their hierarchy for the decision-maker. For example, casual workers' goal of maintaining their social status through securing enough earnings to be able to celebrate festivals and religious events is perceived as more important than the value and preferences attached to casual working – such as the limited recognition of physical work value and the low social status in community. In casual workers' narrative, it is nonetheless a 'good enough' strategy for those who do not have skills, assets or networks to consider other income-generating alternatives. The self-employed's goal of maintaining good family connections by engaging in family businesses, although they may be tempted to engage in other types of activities, is counterbalanced by the value they attach to '*producing*' (handicraft, sewing, tailoring), '*learning on one's own*' and making a living through traditional skill sets. As such, goals and preferences tend to align best for the self-employed, as they manage to differentiate their strategies from others' strategies – ensuring higher earnings compared to more traditional activities – while fulfilling their preference for fitting into the social structure and cultural order; and replicating caste occupational norms derived from traditional caste divisions.

Step #6: Rationality of choice related to making a living

	casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
type of rationality; instrumental rationality, Kantian rationality, collectively-led rationality	<p><i>instrumental rationality</i> – importance of accessing the cash economy and being able to afford clothing and food; sending money home; celebrating religious events</p> <p><i>collectively-led rationality</i> – imitative strategy as each recent migrant is told about construction work opportunities as a fast way of earning money; collective social acceptance of casual work as the only alternative</p>	<p><i>Kantian rationality</i> – value given to '<i>producing</i>'/ '<i>learning on one's own</i>', empowerment over being a self-employed worker beyond the goal of earning a living</p> <p><i>collectively-led rationality</i> – self-employment strategies highly embedded in social structure; replication of caste occupational norms</p> <p><i>instrumental rationality</i> – by adapting aspirations and caste functions to labour market requirements</p>	<p><i>collectively-led rationality</i> – positive social representations around the benefits of being a regular wage worker; security and certainty of earnings contributing to identification with middle and upper social classes' ways of making a living</p>

Interestingly, the type of rationality used by agents as they make decisions relating to making a living does not correspond to a single category of rationality. For instance, the self-employed draw upon three types of rational processes – the Kantian rationality whereby they give value to ‘being a self-employed worker’ beyond the goal of earning a living as they produce what they sell based on their specific set of skills; a collective type of rationality through which the self-employed abide by the idea of replicating caste occupational norms; and finally, an instrumental type of rationality whereby they manage to adapt their aspirations and caste functions to the requirements of the urban labour market (outcome-driven strategy) – therefore getting a dual sense of achievement from finding their own legitimate ways of making a living (means) and managing to fit in the urban fabric (outcomes).

The type of decision process followed by the self-employed further illustrates this point. On the one hand, the type of self-employment (home production, street vending) is chosen based on maximum possible payoff, suggesting risk-taking strategies due to the limited insurance of sufficient earnings, market fluctuations and/ or dependence on loans (maximax). On the other hand, self-employment is framed as a birth-determined profession, with family network and social capital already available leading to limited chances of failure and facility of engaging in activities involving the use of caste-related skills (satisficing). It is therefore a satisfactory alternative in order to enhance one's legitimacy of having a pre-established role and a defined set of skills inherited from his/her family.

By contrast, casual workers follow a different type of decision-making process, describing their employment situation as a good enough strategy vis-à-vis the low expectations regarding alternative work opportunities (maximin; the worst possible outcome of each decision is considered, highest minimum is chosen based on guaranteed return of the decision).

Step #7: Types of decision-making process related to making a living

	casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
type of decision-making process; optimising (choosing the very best), satisficing (first satisfactory alternative chosen), maximax (maximum possible payoff), maximin (highest minimum chosen based on return)	maximin – guaranteed return of a day spent on a construction site; low risk-taking strategy; absence of commitment; low expectations regarding alternative work opportunities; a good enough strategy	maximax – type of self-employment (home production, street vending) chosen based on maximum possible payoff; risk-taking strategy and innovative businesses; limited insurance of sufficient earnings, market fluctuations, dependence on loans satisficing – satisfactory alternative chosen to enhance legitimacy of having a pre-established role and a defined set of skills inherited from the family	satisficing – satisfactory alternative as regular employment is granted through family connections and recommendations; no risk-taking, other/ better alternatives may exist with regards to financial returns vs. security of having been granted access to a regular position

Step #8: Degree of decision embeddedness for making a living

degree of decision embeddedness : collective vs. individual endeavours; tendency to comply, imitate or differentiate

casual workers	self-employed	regular wage workers
<i>imitation and compliance</i> – motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order to not to be judged by the community; easy to access opportunities that slum dwellers go to look for in groups; similar strategies for similar slum dwellers having no skills and no other choice	<i>differentiation</i> – individual-level strategy of differentiation from others' low income-generating activities; individual sense of empowerment and agency; 'learning on one's own', idea of doing something others can't <i>compliance</i> – compliance with social/ cultural order and replication of caste functions; activities relating to the skill set the self-employed acquired from belonging to a specific caste group; derived from traditional caste divisions the rules of which slum dwellers tend to comply with	<i>compliance and differentiation</i> – tendency to comply with urban norms and middle and upper social classes' ways of making a living; individual-level strategy of accessing a regular waged position and being able to differentiate oneself from other slum dwellers' informal ways of making a living

The findings presented above demonstrate that a specific system of normative beliefs result in recurrent patterns in the decisions relating to making a living made by slum dwellers. Decision pathways (information, alternatives, criteria, goals, values and preferences, level of rationality) at the level of the slum community are identified for the different types of livelihood strategies, and reveal the existence of decision-making processes shaped by the micro-level structures in the Thapathali slum area – which, in different ways for the different livelihood groups, give reasons and meanings to decisions related to making a living made by slum dwellers. The decision pathways identified for the different types of livelihood strategies are summarised below.

Casual workers' decision pathway: Guaranteed return of daily wage (instrumental rationality), low risk-taking strategy (maximin) and lack of other alternatives (information, alternatives and criteria)

Based on the information that construction sites are hiring casual workers on a daily basis; that there are chances of accessing work in a flexible way by getting daily contracts; that private contractors visit slum areas to hire daily workers on construction sites; that skills are not required; that opportunities available to men and women; and that slum dwellers' goals are to access the cash economy, being able to afford clothing and food (recent migrants' first encounter with urban living conditions), send money home if possible and maintain one's social status through securing enough earnings to be able to celebrate festivals and religious events; then slum dwellers engaging in casual work are more likely to be individuals giving importance and meaning to the guaranteed return of a day spent on a construction site; low risk-taking strategy; absence of commitment; low expectations regarding alternative work opportunities; a 'good enough' strategy. There is for these individuals a motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order to not to be judged by the community; easy to access opportunities that slum dwellers go to look for in groups; and similar strategies for similar slum dwellers having no skills and no other choice.

Self-employed workers' decision pathway: Social status (goal), family influence (criteria), legitimacy of having a pre-established role (value and preferences) and differentiation (degree of decision embeddedness)

Based on the information that individuals' family setting/ social network are informational assets for starting a new enterprise/ street vending activities; that it is easy to start a business with a lump sum/ small initial capital from family/ loans; that there is the shared knowledge among urban dwellers and new migrants that street vending is more risky compared to other types of activities due to the attitudes of local authorities; that the perceived probability of success of home-based enterprise is deemed high by slum dwellers who contemplate starting their own business by looking at others' successes; and that slum dwellers' goals are to maintain good family connections by engaging in family businesses; to get social status and recognition from community for being innovative/ entrepreneurial; and to differentiate one's strategy from others to ensure higher earnings compared to more traditional activities; then slum dwellers engaging in self-employment are more likely to be individuals giving importance and meaning to self-employment as a birth-determined profession; associate value to family network and social capital already available with limited chances of failure and facility of engaging in activities involving the use of caste-related skills; and find self-employment as a satisfactory alternative to enhance legitimacy of having a pre-established role and a defined set of skills inherited from the family. There is for these individuals a motivation to differentiate themselves through individual-level strategies of differentiation from others' low income-generating activities; individual sense of empowerment and agency; '*learning on one's own*', idea of doing something others can't; and to comply with social/ cultural order and replication of caste functions; with activities relating to the skill set the self-employed acquired from belonging to a specific caste group, derived from traditional caste divisions the rules of which slum dwellers tend to comply with.

Regular waged workers' decision pathway: Securing regular and steady income (goal), identification with upper social classes (value and preferences) and differentiation from low status associated with daily wage work (collectively-led rationality)

Based on the information that regular wage positions are difficult to secure; that it is important to have a social network to get information about regular waged jobs; that recommendations from former colleagues or family are required in order to access regular work; that skills are required for regular positions such as plumbing, mechanics, security guard or office helper; and that slum dwellers' goals are to secure regular and steady income; to seek social stature through regular/ more formal types of activities; and to conform to the idea that receiving a regular wage resembles upper social classes' way of making a living; then slum dwellers engaging in regular wage work are more likely to be individuals giving importance and meaning to regular employment being granted through family connections and recommendations; no risk-taking, other/ better alternatives may exist with regards to financial returns versus security of having been granted access to a regular position. There is for these individuals a motivation to comply with urban norms and middle and upper social classes' ways of making a living; it is also an individual-level strategy to access a regular waged position and being able to differentiate oneself from other slum dwellers' informal ways of making a living.

'Rational' decisional pathways?

In light of the decision pathways identified in this section, the agent is observed as an entity capable of decisions – capable of '*rational*' decisions, to the extent that these decisions follow a rational pathway in the meaning and narrative the agent builds for himself/herself ('internal' validity) around his/her decisions (Elster 2007).

The ways in which decisions can be interpreted as rationally-based decisions are nevertheless subjected to the subjective interpretation of the decision environment produced by the group of slum dwellers, and the decisional pathways followed by each individual agent are likely to be (1) based on the endowments (assets, skills, social capital) of the agent prior to the decision-making process, (2) based upon the decision environment and shared knowledge and rules encompassed in the social environment (e.g. social status associated with a certain activity), and (3) based on the ways in which agents shift in their decisions following their primary engagement with one or another ways of making a living. Consequently, disentangling whether (a) agents are likely to follow a certain decision pathway due to their primary endowments or the influence of the decision environment or whether (b) agents, since already engaged in a certain decision pathway, are likely to present the characteristics of this decision pathways *a posteriori* (e.g. by being a casual worker, the agent revises his/her goals and criteria to align his/her narrative with the activity s/he is engaged in), is difficult to assess. Therefore, the processes by which the micro-level structures tend to shape how individuals respond to rules and conventions may also be interpreted as processes through which the agents adapt to rules and conventions by *a posteriori* shifting their rational narrative following the narrative of the specific activity the agent is already engaged in doing. It follows from this that decision-making processes can hardly be interpreted as linear, singled-directed pathways, and rather combine two or more directions of the decisional processes which led the agents to their present ways of making a living (at the time where the research was conducted) and the present narrative they hold about these.

Volatility of subjective norms

Consequently, while **attitudes/ beliefs** and **subjective norms** are a relevant framework to distinguish between individual intentions and the influence of others' behaviours, it does not entail that some agents follow the norms while others deviate from these norms. On the contrary, it is the production of subjective norms – that is, the ways in which agents adapt their initial intentions and behaviours to the norms – that allows the unpacking of decision processes and decision practices within a constantly evolving normative environment. As such, an important finding relates to the volatility of subjective norms, emerging as part of this research as recurrently interpreted and re-interpreted by agents in an attempt to best align their behaviours with their individual intentions and the collective reasons given for certain behaviours within the community.

How do micro-level structures affect agents' decision-making pathways (cognition)?

As exposed in the first part of this chapter, agents' decision-making pathways revealed the existence of decision-making processes shaped by the micro-level structures in the Thapathali slum area – which, in different ways for the different livelihood groups of slum dwellers, give reasons and meanings to decisions related to making a living made by slum dwellers.

Micro-level structures affect agents' decision-making pathways through the institutionalisation of norms

The institutionalisation of norms draws upon the idea of an existing social stability within the belief system of a particular social group. Therefore, “*institutionalisation [is] defined in terms of the processes by which such patterns achieve normative and cognitive fixity, and become taken for granted*” (Sindzingre 2007: 12). In Thapathali, the institutionalisation of norms is observed through the shifts in individual intentions based on the motivation to comply with others' behaviours – although a fine balance can be observed between the intention to perform a behaviour and the motivation to comply with norms.

Agents are influenced by the choices of other agents, which are perpetuated through the existence of feedback loops. From past choices of other agents, the agent shapes his/her own choices by integrating others' feedback into his/her decision-making process. Beyond the individual intention to making a living using common and accessible livelihood strategies and information flows about available opportunities, evidence was found of the motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order not to be judged by the community (collectively-defined incentive to maintain homogeneity in survival strategies to ensure solidarity within the community). Reproductive processes function as stable patterns for sequences of activities which are being routinely enacted (Sindzingre 2007), and norms perpetuate and coordinate behaviours through the repetition of types of behaviours that are deemed acceptable by a social group.

Micro-level structures may create more room for manoeuvre: 'Religious agency'

An interesting finding relates to the example of religious beliefs and how these are being interpreted and 'used' with the specific group of squatters. Driven by one's will to 'opt out' from caste discrimination, the group of slum dwellers establishes a collective understanding of how religious beliefs can help them overcome discrimination and access further benefits, illustrating how norms serving individual intentions emerge as a collective rule shared within a group of agents. There is also a form of compliance with the collective behaviour regarding caste occupation, which is another indicator of agency and how agents define their own normative beliefs relating to occupation and caste. While caste affiliation may still be a factor of discrimination, it is to a lesser extent within the slum community as caste-related skills enhance the living conditions and access to opportunities of agents, especially those who are self-employed and manage to live from using their birth-determined skills inherited from the previous generations.

The institutionalisation of norms also produces beliefs that are difficult to revise: Valuation neglect and shift in aspirations

The mechanisms at play within behavioural traps resulting from the institutionalisation of norms are further illustrated through the example of the extent to which the dispositions of slum dwellers to strive for further opportunities are limited by their own interpretation of their situation. These are internalised value judgments about aspirations, and the 'motivation' to neglect some of the possibilities and opportunities as part of choosing a valuable life. Value judgments about a certain life or another, or about a certain type of activity or another, demonstrate the narrowness of the space for agency within which opportunities are assessed. Furthermore, the agents' compliance with the shared representation that the community is a moral safety net entails imitative behaviours around support and ensuring a collective feeling of 'being looked after' by the community, although in practical terms, support is very limited and may be organised in a more efficient way if the beliefs about 'community support' were to be revised at the level of the Thapathali community.

Institutionalised norms have varied effects on the different sub-groups within the community

The importance of these cognitive processes unravels the effects of interactions within a specific group. Group membership attributes objective and subjective characteristics to an individual agent based upon the other members' characteristics composing the social group. As observed in the Thapathali community, the influence of norms on individual intentions revealed the existence of collective conservatism, beliefs that are difficult to revise and the resulting behavioural poverty trap effects – although the responses among the sub-groups within the community are varied. For instance, the question of "who has the right to be where?" is answered differently by agents belonging to the same squatting community, indicating that individual agency is not solely related to the individual intentions, but also to the extent to which agents can navigate within the established norms to make decisions that serve them best. The coexistence of different sub-groups within the community is a cross-cutting theme across the different norms, which are either shared among the community as a whole or institutionalised by a specific sub-group of agents.

Influences on decision pathways: Stages of the decisional process are valued differently across the main livelihood groups

Evidence from this chapter show that the agent is observed as an entity capable of decisions – capable of 'rational' decisions, to the extent that these decisions follow a rational pathway in the meaning and narrative the agent builds for himself/herself. However, the decision pathways vary from one livelihood group to another. For instance, decision pathways (information, alternatives, criteria, goals, values and preferences, level of rationality) reveal that the self-employed draw upon three types of rational processes – Kantian rationality, a collective type of rationality and finally, an instrumental type of rationality – therefore constructing a 'rational' narrative reflecting a dual sense of achievement from finding their own legitimate ways of making a living (means) and managing to fit in the urban fabric (outcomes). In the case of casual workers, describing their employment situation as a good enough strategy vis-à-vis the low expectations regarding alternative work opportunities, values and preferences differ from goals – to the extent that strategies are not explained in terms of the 'value'

given to the specific objectives of casual workers but rather find their rationale in the income-earning objective that agents' wish to achieve as part of their way of making a living.

Finally, the processes through which norms tend to shape how individuals respond to rules and conventions may also be interpreted as processes through which the agents adapt to rules and conventions by a *posteriori* shifting their rational narrative following the narrative of the specific activity the agent is already engaged in doing. Decision-making processes can hardly be interpreted as linear, singled-directed pathways, and rather combine both or more directions of the decisional processes which led the agents to their present ways of making a living and the present narrative they hold about these.

Limitations of the approach: Unstable preferences and transitions from one equilibrium to another

Findings derived from an institutionalist perspective therefore involve a range of patterns, and appear to predict the aspects in which institutionalised practices are likely to affect individual behaviours. Limitations can be found to the set of propositions derived from a micro institutional approach, especially regarding the extent to which micro-structures shape recurrent patterns in responses to rules and norms and thereby address the behavioural limitations such as unstable preferences, dispositions, heuristics and/or situational factors. Findings presented above are generalised from the 'average' behaviour and implicitly observed compliance with others' behaviours within the Thapathali community. Findings may therefore not reflect the divergences from these identified recurrent behaviours in the sense, for instance, that preferences for a lifetime migration versus a temporary type of migration may change over time (unstable preferences) and create different dispositions for a certain group of agents. Situational factors such as the eviction events that took place in the Thapathali settlement have demonstrated the importance of situational aspects and how slum dwellers shift from one normative system to another, therefore entailing that institutionalised practices are likely to affect individual behaviours only to the extent that situations and preferences are stable over a specific period of time. Situations of transition from one normative equilibrium to another are less likely to present the same degree of stability in behaviours, and the explanatory power of the cognitive routines of agents may therefore be weakened in situations of changing agrarian economy, conflict-driven migration periods or for instance changing international tourist demand. It follows from this that when exploring decision-making processes through the lens of micro institutionalism, there are important pitfalls associated with the assumption that institutions are fixed in time and only subjected to changes initiated by the groups affected by these institutions' rules and normative systems. Consequently, the value-added of such findings are to be considered within the specific timeframe and scope of the research presented here.

An important finding unravelled as part of the above-mentioned limitations is that exploring the production of subjective norms – that is, the ways in which agents adapt their initial intentions and behaviours to the norms – allows the unpacking of decision processes and decision practices within an evolving normative environment. The volatility of subjective norms, an emerging finding of this research, refers to the idea that norms are recurrently interpreted by agents in an attempt to best align their behaviours with their individual intentions and the collective reasons given for certain behaviours within the community, which provides an explanation for the divergences observed from the recurrent behaviours identified in this chapter.

6.4 Bourdieusian fields, group membership and implications for decision practices

Micro-level structures and the institutionalisation of norms were found to have an influence on the normative beliefs/ subjective norms of each of the livelihood groups among the population of slum dwellers, and patterns have been identified in relation to the reasons behind the choices that shape the decision-making processes related to making a living. Based on the answers to the two previous research questions, the existence of normative beliefs/ subjective norms affecting the decision pathways of agents belonging to specific sub-groups merits further investigation. The research employs Bourdieu's Theory of Practice as an empirical framework for the analysis of group membership and the variation in decision practices within each sub-group (refer to **Section 1**).

Building on Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus (1984), this next stage of the research aims at exploring the existence of normative practice fields (sub-groups perpetuating recurrent normative beliefs) through the lens of respondents' objective characteristics such as income, household size, origin, religion, education level – allowing to test the linkages between shared characteristics and the emergence and reproduction of normative systems through the decision practices and pathways followed by agents.

Graphical representations of perception data from the household survey

Using perception data from the household survey during which perceived norms and beliefs were measured using a Likert scale from 1 (– Strongly agree) to 5 (– Strongly disagree), reasons given by slum dwellers regarding their choice of occupation or livelihood strategy are explored for each of the following categories: financial aspects, money/ success aspects, security and sustainability aspects, education/ skills aspects, physical work aspects, geographical location aspects, absence of choice aspects, imitative strategies aspects, membership norms aspects, religious/ethnic aspects, kinship influence aspects, job competition aspects, social classes and poverty differences aspects. Graphical representations¹²³ presenting the homotheties between different objective characteristics and different beliefs held by slum dwellers, whereby fields are identified and explored as spaces in which norms are being produced and maintained, can be found in **Annex E**.

The ways in which the practice of norms, at the level of sub-groups (group membership), influence the perpetuation of specific decision-making pathways is explored as the extent to which practices link to the socio-economic structures and reinforce the existence of normative systems. It is hypothesised that fields (sub-structures with a relative autonomy although anchored

¹²³ Compiled using perception data from household survey. Percentages do not add up to 100% as the "Do not know" category is not presented on the graphs. The Likert scale is represented on the horizontal axis, from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree", each marker on the axis representing one step on the scale. The vertical axis encompasses several dimensions and therefore several scales; each dimension (e.g. percentage of total households holding belief) is represented in proportion to the distance between each observation within this dimension.

in the larger social structure) such as income, household size, origin, religion, education level are important determinants of the processes by which norms are being produced, adapted and reproduced by each sub-group of slum dwellers, as each of the field dimensions implies specific worldviews recurrently shared and 'practiced' by agents. Fields therefore shape different habitus systems for the different sub-groups – habitus systems which can be understood as a set of structured dispositions, a predefined script, a static code by which individual strategies abide. Bourdieusian fields are therefore explored through a mapping of the degree of homothety between objective structures and normative systems, allowing a categorisation of worldviews in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and an in-depth understanding of how these worldviews are 'practiced' by agents within each field. All the findings presented in the section refer to the sample of respondents interviewed as part of the household survey within the Thapathali community.

Group characteristic #1 – Financial aspects of making a living: *Higher caste groups tend to affirm their social status through the financial aspects of the ways in which they make their living*

The financial aspects of making a living are deemed crucial for more than half of the respondents, among which the strongest views can be attributed to casual workers, for whom access to paid opportunities is a daily challenge. On average, the higher the income group, the stronger the perception relating to the importance of financial aspects when choosing a livelihood strategy is. The high income field therefore produces and maintains the view that high earnings are crucial for organising one's survival in an urban setting, while the habitus of this particular group tends to revolve around having access to money as a success criterion for fitting in the wider urban living dynamics. The education level of this group of slum dwellers is low compared to groups holding the belief that financial aspects related to making a living are not as important, demonstrating the preference for wealth grounded in the habitus of lower education groups. Similar dispositions regarding the importance of financial wealth are expressed among the field of higher caste groups (Janajati), who tend to agree to the statement more strongly than lower caste groups (Dalit), showing a pattern for higher caste groups to affirm their social status through the financial aspects of the ways in which they make their living.

Group characteristic #2 – Monetised and success aspects of making a living: *Diverging habitus on the importance of monetary success*

The monetised and success aspects of making a living slightly differ from the previous statement, as it relates to the extent to which households are *perceived by others* as successful based on their earnings – versus assessing the importance of financial aspects when one chooses his/her livelihood strategy. 42% of the respondents strongly agree with the idea that households are seen as successful because their members have well-paid jobs, among which most respondents holding these views are casual workers belonging to low

education groups. A relatively high proportion of the respondents (22%) tend to strongly disagree with this statement, and share in common the status of being self-employed workers. Their average monthly income is slightly below the casual workers' income (3284 NPR versus 4323 NPR per month), and demonstrates the value given by the self-employed to the type of activity carried out versus the level of income granted by an activity. Belonging to more educated groups, the group of slum dwellers disagreeing with the idea that success comes from having a well-paid job evidences the existence of the belief that social status is not directly related to earnings for individuals who choose self-employment, providing a solid grounding for the internalised dispositions of the self-employed around the importance of being independent and running one's own business.

Group characteristic #3 – Education/ skills' influence on ways of making a living: *Crucial comparative advantage for the self-employed or regular waged workers*

The education/ skills aspects of making a living are deemed fairly important for the higher income groups, and for the self-employed or regular waged workers for whom technical skills are a crucial comparative advantage in their ability to access opportunities such as mechanics, plumbing or handicraft production. On the contrary, casual workers tend to disagree with the idea that education or skills matter when accessing livelihood opportunities, demonstrating the extent to which a specific habitus system relating to the value given to education is expressed among the different livelihood groups within the Thapathali community. Dalit/ Lama caste groups tend to hold the strongest views when it comes to the importance of skills/ education, showing the high reliance for these groups on caste-related skills in order to find opportunities on the urban labour market and differentiate themselves from less discriminated caste groups.

Group characteristic #4 – Job competition: *Undifferentiation versus differentiation*

Job competition aspects of making a living are proxied by the perception around tensions regarding work opportunities. Most respondents (56%) declare that there are no such tensions within the Thapathali community, although views differ from one livelihood group to another. For instance, the self-employed (16%) are more likely to report a feeling of competition around their activities, as they face higher risks with their livelihood strategy which require them to innovate in terms of types of small-scale enterprises in order to be competitive and create benefits from home-based production.

Group characteristic #5 – Involvement in physical work: *Respectability of physical work anchored in shared objective characteristics such as migration origin or ways of making a living*

Involvement in physical work is also a decisive aspect of how individuals choose their livelihood strategy and demonstrates the extent to which beliefs are produced and maintained among groups of slum dwellers regarding the social acceptance of engaging in

physical/ manual activities. Physical work is perceived as being a worthy occupation by only 32% of the respondents, compared to 56% disagreeing about the worthiness of such manual activities. Among the latter, regular waged workers form a group of wealthy households who hold the belief that regular earnings coming from office-type of activities are more respectable than physical activities such as construction work. The self-employed also share common views on the unworthiness of manual work, which demonstrates the existence of homogenous views and practices produced and reproduced across the different livelihood groups. Similarly, slum dwellers originating from Tarai tend to believe in the worthiness of physical work, as opposed to migrants from the Hills, who strongly oppose the idea that physical work is a respectable type of livelihood. This pattern can be explained by the influence of different views towards physical work, as workers from Tarai are more often engaged in farm and agricultural activities compared to populations migrating from the Hills who tend to be involved in more technical and less physical types of manual work such as handicraft production or traditional home-made products. The groundings of belief associated with the respectability of physical work therefore reveal the existence of internalised system of dispositions anchored in shared objective characteristics such as migration origin or ways of making a living.

Group characteristic #6 – Feelings of an absence of choice: *Feelings perpetuated through the sharing of characteristics such as low income or low educational status*

Feelings of an absence of choice related to making a living are mostly expressed by casual workers and lower caste groups (Dalit/ Lama), for whom daily wage activities appear as the only alternative due to limited education or skills. Habitus for these groups is therefore grounded on a shared feeling of disempowerment, which is produced by the current living situations experienced by households and maintained through the lack of confidence of daily waged workers to look for further opportunities. A strong lower caste group influence can be observed and tends to shape the disposition of construction workers with regards to their lack of agency. Caste affiliation therefore reinforces the habitus system of construction workers, whereby similar perceptions of the inability to find better work opportunities are perpetuated among low caste groups through the sharing of objective characteristics such as low income or low educational status.

Group characteristic #7 – Membership norms and sense of community unity: *Construction workers' internalised disposition towards feeling excluded from the local networks of support*

Membership norms aspects of making a living are proxied by respondents' perceptions of the sense of community unity resulting from having similar livelihood strategies. While 40% of respondents strongly hold this view, namely regular waged workers with average-level earnings, 30% tend to disagree with the idea of a community spirit resulting from sharing similar livelihood activities. Among these, most are casual workers who, in spite of higher

earnings compared to the regular waged workers in this group, are more disposed towards believing other community members would not provide support in case of adverse events. This internalised disposition is shared among construction workers who, due to their long working hours outside the Thapathali community, tend to feel excluded from the local networks of support – by contrast with the self-employed working from home or the regular wage workers who spend more time within the community as their activities tend to be based on an office hour schedule.

Group characteristic #8 – Religious/ethnic aspects of making a living: *Differentiated habitus between the well-educated self-employed and low-educated casual workers*

Religious/ethnic aspects of making a living are another important feature of the value given to occupations. Although the religious field is usually thought of as having a great importance in defining the activities carried out by households, 72% of the respondents strongly disagree with the idea that religious/ ethnic groups tend to dictate which occupations are seen as valuable or not. This view is mostly held by casual workers with low educational achievement, who tend to engage in construction work activities regardless of their caste group or ethnic origins. This belief is not shared by the well-educated self-employed group, who have a higher likelihood to make use of their caste-related skills in order to make a living. Similar employment status (within the group of casual workers versus the group of self-employed workers) therefore dictates the extent to which slum dwellers make use of their caste affiliation and develop a habitus of claiming or hiding their caste status, depending upon the use they can make of their status as part of their livelihood strategy. Caste practices are reproduced through the fields of self-employment and high levels of education, which structure the ways in which slum dwellers legitimise their caste affiliation.

Group characteristic #9 – Kinship influence: *Reproduction of practices within the extended family's decision-making space*

Kinship influence aspects of making a living are deemed secondary by 60% of the respondents, who are mostly casual workers getting limited support from their families, as opposed to the self-employed who benefit from their extended family's social capital and connections in order to establish their small-enterprises. The self-employed are therefore more likely to declare that kinship is important when choosing one's occupation, while respondents holding these views tend to come from larger households compared to respondents who disagree with the importance of the kin system as a facilitation factor for making a living. The crucial importance of both social capital and family size therefore illustrates the reproduction of practices within the extended family's decision-making space, structured around family connections and access to local networks for small-scale businesses.

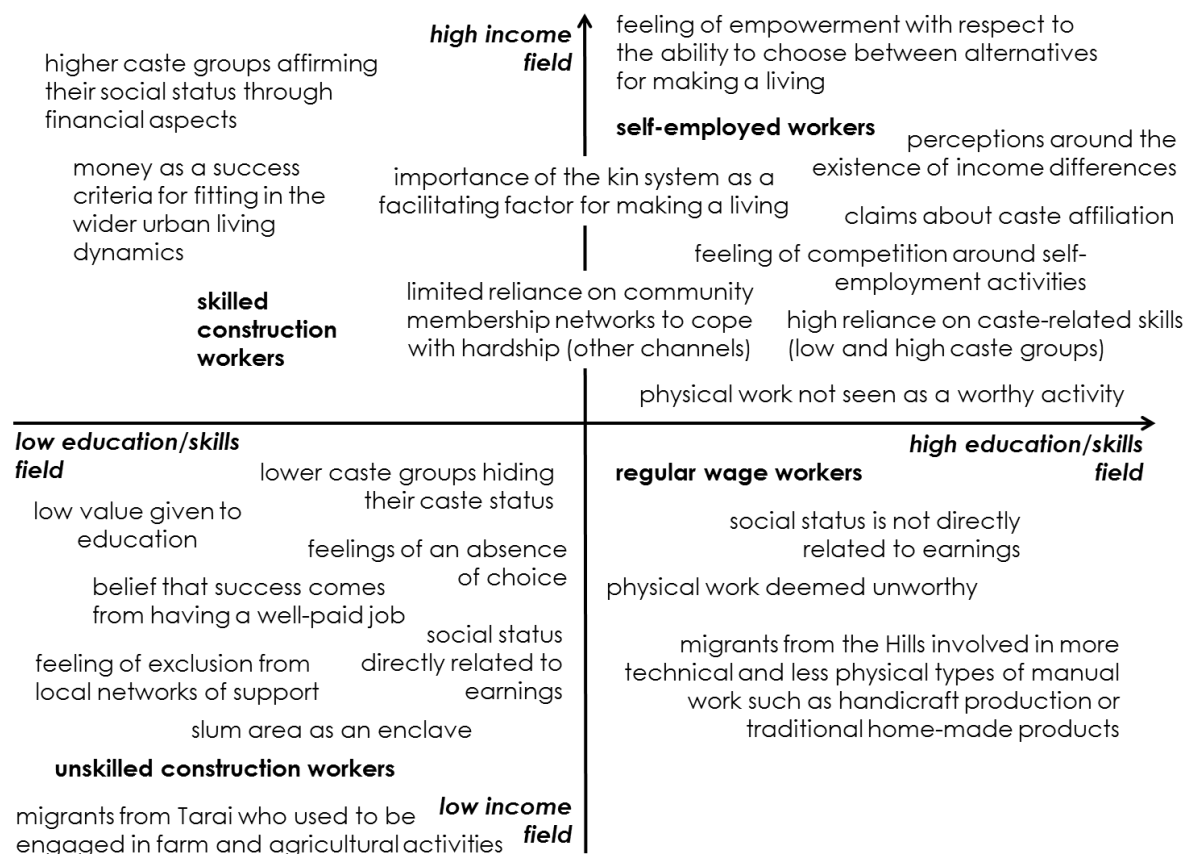
Group characteristic #10 – Social classes/ poverty differences: *Diverging views of the well-offs*

Finally, social classes/ poverty differences aspects of making a living are reported as mostly non-existent within the Thapathali community by regular and casual workers (50%), while differences in poverty are perceived as visible by the self-employed group (38%) who perpetuate the belief that there are income differences and related behaviours of envy within the community as a whole. This view can mostly be explained by the fact that the self-employed are usually well-off compared to other groups, and tend to be singled out as the ones who build permanent dwellings or brick houses, therefore internalising the belief that there are social classes and differences within the slum area.

Different habitus systems for the different sub-groups

Shared characteristics such as income level, education level, caste affiliation, family size, migration origin or main type of livelihood strategy are therefore found to shape different habitus systems for the different sub-groups, identified here as spaces in which norms are being produced and maintained. Fields through which norms are explained are summarised in **Figure 6.7** and **Table 6.8**.

Figure 6.7 Homothety between shared characteristics and normative beliefs



While Ajzen refers to 'others' (motivation to comply with others' behaviours), it can be interpreted from the findings that 'others' belong to different structured groups through which the practice of norms is objectivised following the sharing of objective characteristics. A key assumption from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is that practices are linked to the objective socio-economic structures and reinforce the existence of normative systems. As illustrated in **Figure 6.7**, some fields are found as being 'active' fields shaping how individuals make decisions and follow/perpetuate a certain set of normative beliefs:

- **high income (and low/high education) field;** the high income field produces and maintains the view that high earnings are crucial for organising one's survival in an urban setting, while the habitus of this particular group tends to revolve around having access to money as a success criteria for fitting in the wider urban living dynamics; beliefs associated with the respectability of physical work for the high income field reflect the view that physical work is not perceived as a worthy activity for slum dwellers belonging to this field, therefore revealing the existence of an internalised system of dispositions towards the 'worthiness' of occupations; habitus for this group is therefore grounded on a shared feeling of empowerment with respect to the ability to choose between alternatives for making a living; membership norms, both in terms of community membership and religious affiliation are deemed irrelevant for the high income field, which tend not to rely on membership networks to cope with hardship (other types of safety net through financial security); finally, the high income field tends to agree with the importance of the kin system as a facilitation factor for making a living; and
- **low education (and high/low income) field;** the low education field tends to hold the belief that financial aspects related to making a living are important, demonstrating a preference for wealth grounded in the habitus of lower education groups; furthermore, belonging to lower educated groups, the group of slum dwellers agreeing with the idea that success comes from having a well-paid job evidences the existence of the belief that social status is directly related to earnings for the low education field.

Table 6.8 Habitus systems identified for the different fields

Habitus systems identified for the different fields	importance of financial aspects	importance of money/ success	importance of security and sustainability	importance of education/ skills	physical work perceived as worthy	geographical enclave perceptions	feelings of absence of choice	imitative strategies	membership norms perceived as important	importance of religious/ ethnic aspects	importance of kinship influence	tensions regarding job competition	perception of social classes and poverty differences
high income field	+	+	+		-		-		-	-	+		+
low income field				-					+		-		-
high education field							-	-	-	+			
low education field	+	+		+	-	-	+			-	+	+	
high caste field	+						-				-		+
low caste field	-			+			+				+		-
large extended family							-			+	+		
small extended family										-	-		
Tarai origin				+	+	-		-			+	-	+
Hill origin	+	+	+	-	-	+		+		+	-	+	-
casual worker group	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
self-employed group	-	-		+		-	-			+	+	+	+
regular wage group			+		-		-	-	+	+		-	-

In what ways does the practice of norms, at the level of sub-groups (group membership), influence the perpetuation of specific decision-making pathways?

Based on the answers to the two previous research questions (What are the micro-level structures that frame the normative environment (norms and social representations) in which agents make decisions? and How do micro-level structures affect agents' decision-making pathways (cognition)?), the existence of norms affecting the decision pathways of agents belonging to specific sub-groups was investigated in the second part of this chapter. It was hypothesised that fields (sub-structures with a relative autonomy although anchored in the larger social structure) such as income, household size, origin, religion, education level are important determinants of the processes by which norms are being produced, adapted and reproduced by each sub-group of slum dwellers, as each of the field dimensions implies specific worldviews recurrently shared and 'practiced' by agents.

'Active fields' influencing the perpetuation of specific decision-making pathways

Some fields were found to be 'active' fields shaping how individuals make decisions and follow/ perpetuate a certain set of norms: the high income field, which produces and maintains the view that high earnings are crucial for organising one's survival in a urban setting, agreeing with the importance of the kin system as a facilitation factor for making a living, and perceiving physical work as a non-worthy activity, therefore revealing the existence of internalised dispositions towards the 'worthiness' of occupations; and the low education field, which perpetuate the belief that success comes from having a well-paid job and that social status is directly related to earnings due to the lack of alternatives for the low-educated to enhance their social status via other ways.

Interestingly, fields such as migration origin, religious beliefs or caste affiliation do not appear to have an influence over the norms produced and perpetuated by sub-groups in the Thapathali community. On the contrary, these norms are produced based on occupational sub-groups, demonstrating the importance of the ways of making a living in defining a normative environment for decisions in poverty situations. More specifically, compared to other sub-groups, the sub-group of casual workers disagree with the idea that education or skills matter when accessing livelihood opportunities, demonstrating the extent to which a specific habitus system relating to the value given to education is expressed among certain livelihood groups within the Thapathali community. The habitus for this group is grounded on a shared feeling of disempowerment, which is produced by the current living situations experienced by households and maintained through the lack of confidence of daily waged workers to engage in searching for alternative opportunities. By contrast, the sub-group of self-employed workers perpetuate the view that education and skills are important as their technical skills are a crucial comparative advantage in their ability to access opportunities such as handicraft production; the self-employed also perpetuate the belief among their members that they are able to differentiate themselves from other slum dwellers through innovative ideas for small-scale businesses. Differences in poverty are perceived as visible by the self-employed group who maintain the belief that there are income differences and related behaviours of envy within the community as a whole.

The interplay of different groups within the slum community

The existence of distinct fields therefore supports the argument that most of the field dimensions investigated as part of this research imply specific normative beliefs recurrently shared and 'practiced' by agents. Decisions are influenced by the interplay of different groups within the slum community, the characteristics of which are expressed through socio-economic statuses, education and skills, and social network assets. These sub-groups tend to redefine existing micro-level structures and are spaces for agency for the socially-embedded individual: through different habitus – defined as internalised systems of dispositions, or classificatory schemes, new situations are evaluated in the light of past experiences. However, the set of structures is not static in the sense that it determines decisions in a fixed way, but is on the contrary generative, develops and changes over time following the logic of practice and agents' practices of their habitus (Bourdieu 1980).

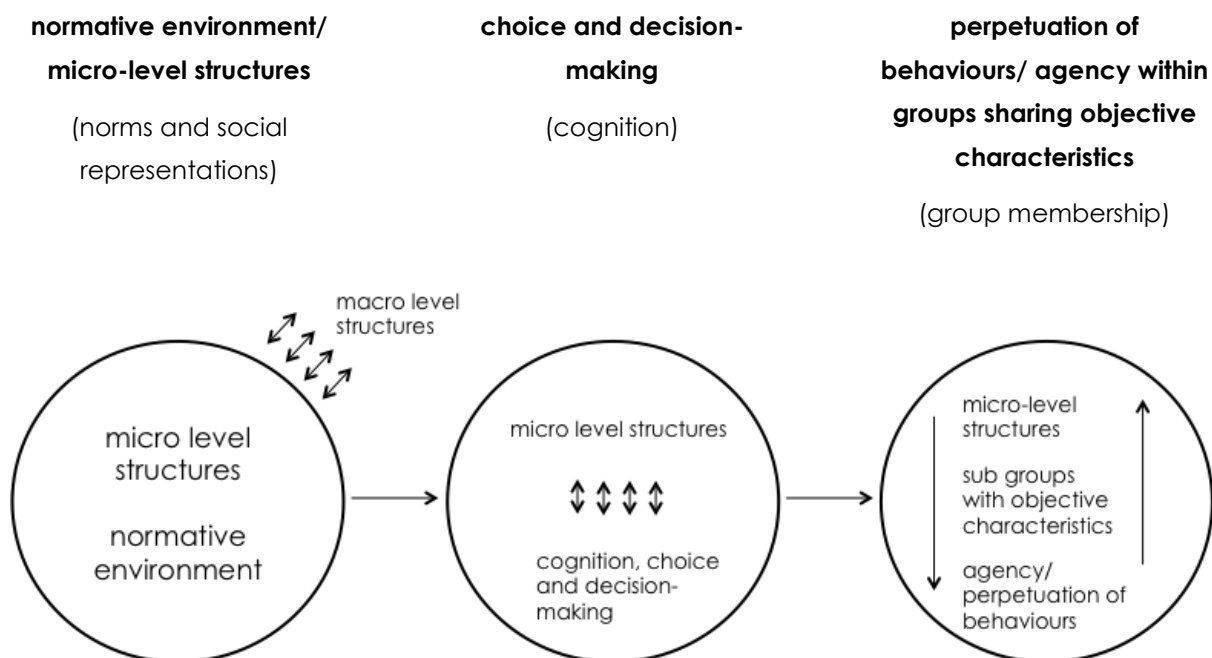
Caste affiliation and opportunity for agency

Interestingly, caste does not appear to constitute a field where a strong set of norms was found to be correlated to objective characteristics (affiliation with different caste groups): different caste groups are not characterised by different set of norms. This may be explained by the fact that the normative systems associated with different caste groups are too diverse to exhibit similar dispositions towards behaviours, and this finding supports the idea that caste norms are negotiated in different ways in rural and urban settings, thereby entailing a shift in caste-related norms for migrant groups who redefine the meanings of their caste affiliation through the use of caste-related skills, seen as urban assets, in the urban labour market.

A key limitation of this approach – and a crucial finding from the research – should be noted here, as the opportunity for agency of the socially-embedded individual is difficult to assess within a conceptual framework which claims to reconcile both structuralist and constructivist approaches. Firstly, the extent to which agents within sub-groups defined by the sharing of objective living characteristics are able to entail a shift in the habitus of their sub-groups through the iterative practice of norms appears to be minimal, and to make a conclusion on this aspect of the research would have implied to observe such a shift in practices over the period during which the research took place. In a social group that underwent eviction events half a year prior to the research, the opportunity for agency could only be observed through the re-creation of a social identity after the events took place. Secondly, Bourdieu's structural constructivist approach to the understanding of individuals, groups and normative systems focuses primarily on the function of structures in shaping the behavioural patterns of agents, therefore leaving limited space for a constructivist interpretation of individual agency and agents' ability to shift the boundaries of structures, or even perceive these shifts.

Conclusion

With the objective of questioning the *meanings* of social phenomena from the perspective of the socially-embedded agent as subjected to the influence of the normative environment, this research set out to explore the interplay of individual and social factors shaping and affecting decision-making processes in poverty situations. The purpose of this concluding section is to synthesise the findings of the doctoral research and emerging implications in the perspective of making an original contribution to the existing literature addressing decision-making, how agents make a living under the constraints of poverty and evolving decision practices in a slum area.



The overarching research question relates to the ways in which poverty affects decision-making related to strategies for making a living, and is answered as part of the synthesis of findings. The main empirical findings are chapter-specific and were summarised within the respective empirical chapters (**Chapters 5 and 6**).

Deciding how to make a living: Disentangling multiple factors

A key finding of the research relates to the existence of multiple factors affecting how one goes about making a living. As shown in the Thapathali community, agents have different ways of envisaging the existing options (or lack of) that can provide them with means of surviving in the slum settlement and in the city.

The influence of commoditisation, the reliance on the cash economy, the poor living conditions in low income urban areas, the environmental hazards linked to the location of urban settlements, the social fragmentation and the lack of inter-household solidarity mechanisms and safety net compared to rural areas – all of these factors are mentioned as part of the Thapathali slum dwellers' discourse about the difficulties of making a living. While the research acknowledged and mapped the relationships and the degree of intensity with which these factors define how one makes a living, urban poverty was further explored from the standpoint of the agents themselves and the extent to which their decisional space is affected by the existence of these multiple factors.

The research demonstrates that among the diversity of factors influencing decisions related to making a living, the existence of normative systems and practices are an important aspect that determines the perspectives with which agents interpret their options.

The objective of the research was not to discuss or reach an agreement over a specific definition of poverty. However its various dimensions were explored in relation to decision pathways and the ways in which material deprivation, monetary poverty, lack of human and social capital, but also subjective poverty interact with decision-making processes.

As such, the research demonstrates that ways of making a living, in poverty situations, need to be explored with a subjective perspective that encompasses the influence of norms and the ability to manoeuvre around norms. In the attempt to disentangle the factors that affect one's decision, the normative aspects are shown to be an additional layer (beyond individual attitudes and beliefs) in the informational base that agents draw upon to decide how to make a living in situations of poverty.

It follows that behavioural approaches to poverty that are set to explore decisions in poverty situations may be overlooking a significant factor, that is, the normative aspects of decision-making in poverty contexts. Banerjee and Mullainathan (2010) state that their behavioural approach does not imply that individuals in poverty situations are endowed with less rationality or common sense than any other agent, as deliberation and considerations over a set of alternatives may be even more acute in poverty context due to the low margin of error and the irreversibility of consequences.

Nonetheless, agents living in poverty are not simply subjected to a limited margin of error in economic or social terms. The Thapathali slum dwellers, as shown in the case study, are subjected to the norms and social representations that exist in any given social group, and that should be studied as part of a comprehensive approach to understanding how not only the poor but any agent make decisions about their living. Through a shared knowledge of the geographic location of opportunities, transportation costs, access to basic amenities, land tenure and local

administrations, agents identify themselves as belonging to a social group facing similar obstacles to making a living. The extent to which obstacles to opportunities are perceived may vary for different agents of the same social group; however, the existence of micro-level structures shaped by similar living conditions entails a certain degree of constraint in accessing opportunities in the city.

For instance, the squatting identity of agents forces them to develop strategies for making a living that exclude employment opportunities for which a formal address is required. A collective belief around the inability of squatters to access regular and secured forms of employment may prevent all agents within the social groups to even search for this type of employment opportunity.

The intervention of subjective norms in the decision process such as the influence of others' behaviours entails a different approach to risk-taking for agents. For instance agents living in poverty may be less likely to differentiate their strategies from other members of the social group, as they may face discrimination and limited support from other agents as they attempt to go about more risky ways of making a living. As such, the research presented here provides a solid ground in support of Wallmann's views that making a living *"is never just a matter of finding or making shelter, transacting money, getting food to put on the family table or to exchange on the market place. It is equally a matter of ownership and circulation of information, the management of skills and relationships and the affirmation of personal significance... and group identity. The tasks of meeting obligations, of security, identity and status, and organising time are as crucial to livelihood as bread and shelter"* (Wallmann 1984; in Appendini 2001: 25).

As illustrated in the Thapathali case study, most dwellers perceive their occupations as being very similar to one another, and have the feeling of sharing a homogenous status at the level of the community; poverty is socially-constructed around one single and shared narrative which is that poverty equates with living in a squatting community, regardless of the income differences measured across households. By contrast, the social structures are more easily observed through representations associated with being successful or doing what one is good at, regardless of the low/high earnings or physical aspects of manual jobs for instance. Power structures and arenas of cooperation or conflict between actors are revealed through the existence of higher and lower social status groups rather than socio-economic groups, social status being associated with the values given to the type of activity carried out by dwellers.

As such, 'community homogeneity' and 'community heterogeneity' discourses manage to coexist within the Thapathali community, demonstrating the concomitant existence of antagonist subjective norms that serve different purposes at different points in time or for different sub-groups of slum dwellers. This suggests that while social representations construct a symbolic community which provides meaning and identity for its members, these social representations are subjected to variations that are crucial to the understanding of decision-making pathways, and these should be investigated more systematically as part of similar studies.

The normative environment: A complex aggregate

A critique to Wallmann's interpretation of how livelihood strategies take shape within a community that was tentatively addressed in this research is that the "*tasks of meeting obligations, of security, identity and status*" (Wallmann 1984; in Appendini 2001: 25) are not a straightforward list of constraints that play a role in one's ability to make decisions. When meeting these obligations of security, identity and status, agents find themselves faced with a complex aggregate that is the normative environment.

Similarly, Arce and Hebinck (2002)'s concept of 'style' – arguing that "*a focus on organisational practices might take the livelihood framework beyond the unit of analysis of individual strategies*" (Arce and Hebinck 2002: 7), is equally limited by the lack of definition of these "*distinguishable patterns of orientations and action concerning the variety of means to achieve security; these patterns are structured by an internal logic and conditioned by social, economic and personal characteristics of people involved*" (Nooteboom 2003: 54). As such, the strategic behaviour of agents is recognised as having its own importance while agents' behaviours are perceived as being framed by both structural constraints and the repertoire of shared beliefs, past experiences, knowledge and similar interests that constitutes the practices and rules that agents should follow within their groups.

The research demonstrates that these 'patterns' can be defined and explored as part of a conceptual framework that unravels the complexity of shared beliefs, past experiences, knowledge and similar interests among agents.

For instance, it was found that individual decision-making should be regarded as a structured and iterative process including interactions with the normative environment. While micro-level structures are identified as organisational structures with an autonomous existence (representations with a deontic form on specific behaviours, commonly shared by a social group), the analysis of these sets of *structuring* beliefs should follow a two-folded unpacking strategy:

- on the one hand, institutional forces (norms) can be explored through their expression at the level of individual intentions to perform (or not perform) a behaviour (attitudes and beliefs);
- on the other hand, the subjective interpretation of how individuals behave based on their motivation to comply with others' behaviours (subjective norms or normative beliefs) should be studied as another, sometimes competing, manifestation of norms within a community.

Neither norms nor beliefs: The rationale for investigating normative beliefs

As such, an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms at play behind the ways in which agents make sense of the wider socio-economic and political processes that operate at local levels is what this thesis provides in order to understand the decisional processes behind 'making a living', and not simply the earning activities carried out by agents.

The research found that the existence of social representations suggests that a group of agents expects similar outcomes from a given behaviour – that is, the mere fact of sharing common views at the level of the entire community or sub-groups in the community implies that common beliefs, encompassing the 'common view' and thereby the views of others on a given situation, exist and define the boundaries of one or several normative systems.

What the research has also revealed is that it is important to note that social representations are the only observables, and that norms per se cannot be measured or assessed in agents' discourse for the reason that these norms are entangled with personal beliefs and attitudes.

Through their discourse, agents therefore relay subjective norms/ normative beliefs, i.e. beliefs which are influenced by norms or definitions of what is acceptable. Norms were found to contribute to giving shape to the ways in which agents make sense of the values deemed acceptable within the community and within the city context – while the resulting normative beliefs have a prescriptive role in determining how agents make decisions within their groups.

The institutionalisation of norms: Room for agency versus cognitive fixity

The research therefore took a step forward in understanding "*institutionalisation [as] defined in terms of the processes by which such patterns achieve normative and cognitive fixity, and become taken for granted*" (Sindzingre 2007: 12).

It was found that the analysis of individual decisions should consider the logic of decisions, as influenced by the normative environment, and this research put forward a framework to unpack the processes mentioned by Sindzingre (2007).

By using an institutionalist approach to understand the micro-level structures in the Thapathali community that frame and sometimes restrict the actions that are relevant, appropriate, or permitted in certain types of situations, the research presented here provides a tentative identification of the norms that can be observed behind the beliefs and behaviours of agents. As such, the research demonstrated that the process of normative institutionalisation can be unravelled through:

- (1) the analysis of the distinctions between what agents' individual intentions are and their motivations to comply with what they perceived as being others' positions;
- (2) the compilation of belief maps (beliefs that are recurrent within a group, and relations between thematic categories of beliefs) that reveals the existence of differentiated normative beliefs (beliefs 'adjusted' with the prevalent norm) across groups of agents; and

(3) the study of the relationship between normative beliefs and the socio-economic characteristics of agents (high versus low income, high versus low education – among others).

The research shows that agents are influenced by the choices of other agents, which are perpetuated through the existence of feedback loops. From past choices of other agents, the agent shapes his/her own choices by integrating others' feedback into his/her decision-making process. For instance, beyond the individual intention to making a living using common and accessible livelihood strategies and information flows about available opportunities, evidence was found of the motivation to imitate others' livelihood activities in order not to be judged by the community (collectively-defined incentive to maintain homogeneity in survival strategies to ensure solidarity within the community).

As part of the unpacking of the production of subjective norms/ normative beliefs, a crucial finding relates to the example of religious beliefs and how these are being interpreted and 'used' with the specific group of squatters. Driven by one's will to 'opt out' from caste discrimination, the group of slum dwellers establishes a collective understanding of how religious beliefs can help them overcome discrimination and access further benefits, illustrating how norms serving individual intentions emerge as a collective rule shared within a group of agents. This suggests that Weber's interpretation of religion as the rationalisation of reality can be approached from the angle of the *instrumentalisation* of the rationalisation of reality.

What the research demonstrates here is the importance of exploring the production process for subjective norms/ normative beliefs: religious practices and associated social representations are subjected to the production of various interpretations – strategic or unconscious – that are crucial to the understanding of decision-making pathways related to making a living. As such, the conceptual framework used as part of the research provides both the tools and the rationale for investigating beyond norms as part of similar studies.

The research also found that the institutionalisation of norms produces beliefs that are difficult to revise. The mechanisms at play within behavioural traps resulting from the institutionalisation of norms are further illustrated through the example of the extent to which the dispositions of slum dwellers to strive for further opportunities are limited by their own interpretation of their situation. These are internalised value judgments about aspirations, and the 'motivation' to neglect some of the possibilities and opportunities as part of choosing a valuable life. Value judgments about a certain life or another, or about a certain type of activity or another, demonstrate the narrowness of the space for agency within which opportunities are assessed.

As such, various payoffs coexist and dictate the extent to which conformity minimises the risk of deviant behaviours and sanctions. The trust in rules and their resulting enforcement only stabilise as the outcomes occur in line with the expectations of the social group. It can be hypothesised from the findings of this research that this also implies certain experimentations of variant behaviours, which have the potential to allow a change in the normative system.

Cognitive fixity and the stabilisation of certain types of behaviours have therefore been questioned as part of the research. The existence of 'institutional traps', defined by Bowles as "*beliefs related to affiliation (e.g., ethnic and religious) or politics (e.g., maintained by populist*

leaders, or the 'voluntary servitude' coined by La Boetie)" (Sindzingre 2007: 16), is contested by the findings relating to the volatility of subjective norms: while attitudes/ beliefs and subjective norms are a relevant framework to distinguish between individual intentions and the influence of others' behaviours, it does not entail that some agents follow the norms while others deviate from these norms.

On the contrary, an important finding relates to the volatility of subjective norms, emerging as part of this research as recurrently interpreted and re-interpreted by agents in an attempt to best align their behaviours with their individual intentions and the collective reasons given for certain behaviours within the community. It can be hypothesised that experimentations of variant behaviours are for instance supported by the volatility of subjective norms, and by the potential for revisiting one's rationale for behaviour in light of a changing interpretation of norms. As such, it may be that norms, in their primary definition as 'deontic forms of belief', do not exist per se, but consist in the congregation of evolving subjective norms. This suggests the need for normative studies to explore normative environments beyond the simple concept of norms.

The coexistence of parallel systems: A case for investigating normative beliefs within sub-groups

According to Platow (2005: 543), "*group processes are made possible through the categorisation of self as a group member – psychologically interchangeable with others*". It follows that social identity is both the basis for shared social action between group members and the product of the wider social world's history and present.

As demonstrated in this research, the focus on individuals' narratives revealed the existence of sub-groups, as contradictory social representations emerged during the interviews conducted with each household. This demonstrates the existence of various power structures within the slum community, and different narratives are used by agents in order to navigate around the different groups holding different beliefs in the community. The narratives created around the normative beliefs framing the slum environment reveal the existence of different degrees of access to the various networks and opportunities available to each sub-group, suggesting the existence of parallel systems coexisting within the overarching narrative agents refer to as they express their views vis-à-vis the community or their sub-group.

The complexity of the narratives around subjective norms is revealed through the existence of contradicting social representations (in relation to social status, meanings associated with occupational status, feelings of being all equally poor versus differences in representations about the 'rich' and the 'poor'), which suggests that social representations are not static nor consistent between each group of households.

On the contrary, slum dwellers tend to become more specific about the different beliefs held by groups in the community, whether they refer to the grand narrative at the level of the community or speak about their own household and personal views. These contradictions may also be explained by the strategies, conscious or unconscious, employed by agents as they interpret the questions asked by the researcher, and decide to place themselves either as holding the 'common view' for true or presenting their own personal beliefs in relation to the sub-groups they belong to.

An implication of this finding relates to the importance of investigating normative beliefs across different sub-groups, as the absence of a clear definition of norms when studied by researchers at the level of a community may imply that researchers overlook the process of norm institutionalisation within the community, thereby resulting in normative beliefs that differ from one sub-group to another. Without a critical number of interviews, representative of the various groups, or potentially conducted at different points in time with the same interviewees, the different patterns across sub-groups are unlikely to be revealed and researchers run the risk of confusing the normative system at the community level with a partial understanding of what a sub-group of agents considers its normative beliefs.

It may be argued that the granularity of findings, at the community level and at the level of sub-groups, is merely a luxury of this research, and that following this line of argumentation, the researcher may as well delve into normative beliefs using psychological approaches.

It is nonetheless a crucial finding from this research to have demonstrated the differences in normative beliefs held by different sub-groups, and as such it revealed, without this being a fundamental objective of the research, that norms cannot be observed as such, and that the only 'study object' that could be extracted from the systematic interview of a critical sample of respondents within a community are the normative beliefs that reflect the process of norms institutionalisation for each of the different sub-groups of agents. Without observing the variations in agents' discourses, the researcher would not have been able to question the definitions of norms, beliefs and normative beliefs, which led to the clarification of this process of norm institutionalisation (from attitudes and beliefs, to norms and normative beliefs).

Stages of the decisional process: Demonstrating the multiplicity of 'rational' pathways

Further evidence from this research shows that the agent is observed as an entity capable of decisions – capable of 'rational' decisions, to the extent that these decisions follow a rational pathway (based on information, alternatives, criteria, goals, values and preferences, level of rationality) in the meaning and narrative the agent builds for himself/herself.

However, the decision pathways vary from one occupational group to another. For instance, decision pathways reveal that the self-employed draw upon three types of rational processes – Kantian rationality, a collective type of rationality and finally, an instrumental type of rationality – therefore constructing a 'rational' narrative reflecting a dual sense of achievement from finding their own legitimate ways of making a living (means) and managing to fit in the urban fabric (outcomes). In the case of casual workers, describing their employment situation as a good enough strategy vis-à-vis the low expectations regarding alternative work opportunities, values and preferences differ from goals – to the extent that strategies are not explained in terms of the 'value' given to the specific objectives of casual workers but rather find their rationale in the income-earning objective that agents' wish to achieve as part of their way of making a living.

As such, agents find reasons and meanings to their decisions that can be mapped using the different stages of the decisional process (information, alternatives, criteria, goals, values and preferences, level of rationality). The implications of this finding are key to the understanding of how one defines rationality and the extent to which reasons can be found by agents to justify their choices and explain about their decisions. This suggests that the processes by which the

micro-level structures tend to shape how individuals **respond to** rules and conventions may also be interpreted as processes through which the agents **adapt to** rules and conventions by a *posteriori* shifting their rational narrative following the narrative of the specific activity the agent is already engaged in doing.

It follows from this that not one, but several interpretations of a rational decision pathway may coexist from the perspective of agents, as far as these interpretations follow the evidenced stages of the decisional process. It is the production of subjective norms – that is, the ways in which agents adapt their initial intentions and behaviours to the norms – that allows the unpacking of decision processes and decision practices within a constantly evolving normative environment. It can be hypothesised that the decisional processes which led the agents to their present ways of making a living (at the time where the research was conducted) and the present narrative they hold about these are multi-directional, and that these need a close monitoring to capture how the interpretation of rational pathways evolve over time, for any research that sets the study of decision-making processes as its goal.

Exploring the anchoring of practices through objective characteristics shared within sub-groups: The production of norms as deeply entrenched within occupational sub-groups

Finally, it was hypothesised as part of this research that fields (sub-structures with a relative autonomy although anchored in the larger social structure) such as income, household size, origin, religion, education level are important determinants of the processes by which norms are being produced, adapted and reproduced by each sub-group of slum dwellers, as each of the field dimensions implies specific worldviews recurrently shared and 'practiced' by agents.

Some fields were found to shape how individuals make decisions and perpetuate a certain set of norms: the high income field, which produces and maintains the view that high earnings are crucial for organising one's survival in an urban setting, agreeing with the importance of the kin system as a facilitation factor for making a living, and perceiving physical work as a non-worthy activity, therefore revealing the existence of internalised dispositions towards the 'worthiness' of occupations; and the low education field, which perpetuate the belief that success comes from having a well-paid job and that social status is directly related to earnings due to the lack of alternatives for the low-educated to enhance their social status via other ways.

Nonetheless, fields such as migration origin, religious beliefs or caste affiliation do not appear as having an influence over the norms produced and perpetuated by sub-groups in the Thapathali community. On the contrary, these norms are produced based on occupational groups, demonstrating the importance of the ways of making a living in framing the normative environment for decisions in poverty situations.

As such, Bourdieu's approach to the production of norms within a social group, when applied to this research, demonstrates that it is not solely the similarity in living conditions (income, origin, education, etc.) that shape group membership across the different sub-group of agents, but agents' affiliation to occupational groups ('being' self-employed, 'being' a construction worker, etc.).

It can be inferred that habitus systems in poverty contexts such as the Thapathali community are based on the sharing of occupational characteristics and the social statuses associated to these, rather than solely socio-economic circumstances, even though these differ considerably across households.

This finding further questions the relevance of concepts such as Durlauf's membership theory or Bowles' conception of micro-level poverty traps. If group membership attributes objective and subjective characteristics to an individual agent based upon the other members' characteristics composing the social group, this research demonstrates that exploring socio-economic characteristics and their subjective interpretation by agents is a limitation of the membership theories – since another 'level' of group membership exists at the level of sub-groups and based on agents' social routines and statutes granted by their different occupations. This suggests an opportunity for replicating the present study in different contexts to further assess the validity of concepts such as membership groups and micro-level poverty traps.

A broader conclusion of this thesis relates to the utility of the conceptual framework (using Ajzen and Bourdieu's approaches to decision-making processes and practices), which was 'compiled' for the purpose of the research. While a comprehensive, coherent and workable framework, some limitations have been experienced in relation to Bourdieu's Theory of Practice used as an empirical framework for the analysis of group membership and the variation in decision practices within each sub-group. If Bourdieu's approach seeks to explain the underlying forces of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluating, speaking and acting as structuring all expressive, verbal, and practical manifestations of a person, these 'forces' (habitus systems) identified in the Thapathali community appear to lack a mature and durable anchoring in the different social groups present in the community. Rather than a product of history, the habitus systems engendered by the settlement of squatters in Thapathali in 2006 are still in the early stages of adjusting to the current context and being reinforced by further experience.

As such, the use of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice as an empirical framework may be more relevant in situations where the study population consists in a larger social group, encompassing more apparent heterogeneity than a group formed by 200 households living in a restricted and enclosed space. Secondly, Bourdieu's approach may be more suited for cases in which habitus systems are properly anchored in historical processes, that is, shaped after several generations which allowed norms to mature to a stage in which specific habitus systems emerge across the studied fields.

Limitations of the study

Despite the rigorous approach taken to define a comprehensive and tailored framework for the social scientist to identify the variables of interest, the study encountered a number of limitations, which need to be considered.

A key limitation of this approach relates to the fact that the opportunity for agency of the socially-embedded individual is difficult to assess within a conceptual framework which claims to reconcile both structuralist and constructivist approaches.

Firstly, the extent to which agents within sub-groups defined by the sharing of objective living characteristics are able to entail a shift in the habitus of their sub-groups through the iterative practice of norms appears to be minimal, and to make a conclusion on this aspect of the research would have implied to observe such a shift in practices over the period during which the research took place. In a social group that underwent eviction events half a year prior to the research, the opportunity for agency could only be observed through the re-creation of a social identity after the events took place.

Secondly, Bourdieu's structural constructivist approach to the understanding of individuals, groups and normative systems focuses primarily on the function of structures in shaping the behavioural patterns of agents, therefore leaving limited space for a constructivist interpretation of individual agency and agents' ability to shift the boundaries of structures, or even perceive these shifts.

The capacity of the conceptual framework to predict and explain behaviours is affected by both these limitations. The deductive aspect of the research allowed a comprehensive normative mapping of the case study and the possibility to predict behaviours within the framework of reference – which, in the case of Thapathali settlement, provides a range of insights for policy-makers to address situations of poverty and adapt policy interventions to account for actors' behaviours. The atypicality of the case study is also its main strength, in the sense that the succession of events circumstantially created a situation that allows the study of socially-constructed norms produced within a specific timeframe, for a settlement that was uncharacteristically stable in terms of composition and membership.

Nonetheless, to predict the aspects in which institutionalised practices are likely to affect individual behaviours would have required a comparative approach and the testing of the conceptual framework in other environments – to establish the generalizable patterns of the Thapathali settlement case. As such, this research is an important entry point and a call for replication across different contexts.

Ways in which poverty affects decision-making related to making a living: Implications for future research

While this research encompasses various implications for future research, the main implication relates to the ways in which poverty is studied as affecting decision-making processes related to making a living. Applications of the conceptual framework presented in this doctoral thesis would be specifically adapted to case study research in the field of international development, both for academic researchers and development practitioners who seek to use practical tools anchored in a coherent theoretical framework.

Having demonstrated the differences in normative beliefs held by different sub-groups, and as such revealed, without this being a fundamental objective of the research, that norms cannot be observed as such, and that the only 'study object' that could be extracted from the systematic interview of a critical sample of respondents within a community are the normative beliefs that reflect the process of norms institutionalisation for each of the different sub-groups of agents, the importance of the conceptual framework used as part of this research and the

potential for replication across contexts are a critical contribution to the debate around poverty and decision-making.

Beyond issues related to poverty, the 'poverty' component of this research has been studied as a circumstantial although critical aspect of how agents go about making a living. While differences in income and other dimensions of poverty were raised to the attention of the reader, the effects of poverty have been explored as part of agents' discourses and the study of their narratives, namely through the use of belief maps, allowed an iterative refinement of the conceptual framework and the conceptualisation of attitudes, beliefs, norms and normative beliefs.

To generate conclusive evidence in relation to the normative systems that affect agents' decisions, there is a need for other similar case studies that set out to apply this research process to different thematic areas for which the study of both objective and subjective aspects would add value to the understanding of underlying causes: for instance, taking stock of local actors' discourses, conducting sub-group decision analysis, drawing belief maps using a quantitative textual coding approach or exploring the role of different narratives within a community. By definition, any group of agents that can be explored as consisting in a social group, could be a good candidate for such research.

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Annexes

A | Informed consent sheet and permissions to reproduce

B | Key informant interview guide

C | Household questionnaire

D | Life stories interview guide

E | Additional tables and figures

A | Informed consent sheet and permissions to reproduce

Informed consent

The following paragraph explains the purpose of the research as it was explained to key informants/ slum dwellers when seeking consent:

I am a PhD student studying issues related to poverty. The purpose of this interview is to understand how people make choices about their living and how they find employment opportunities. This questionnaire will take an hour or so to be completed, and data will be used strictly for this research. No name will be used, no quotes will be associated with names. Do you understand and agree to participate to this survey/interview?

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For the figures (official maps and personal photographs) that required a permission to reproduce, the permissions were sought and granted.

- Figure 4.9: Confirmation email from Kathmandu Metropolitan City.
- Figure 5.4: Adapted from U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (2011); accessed from <http://www.geographicguide.com/>. Confirmation email from the Geographic Guide.
- Photograph 4.10: Confirmation email from David Tesinsky (www.tesinskyphoto.com).

B | Key informant interview guide

Key topics discussed

- Role and function of key informant;
- Slum context in Kathmandu, history and social aspects; general knowledge of the Thapathali slum area;
- Migration patterns, religion and ethnicity of slum dwellers;
- Labour market and opportunities for slum dwellers;
- Type of employment and barriers to accessing opportunities;
- Importance of social networks and information about opportunities;
- Infrastructures and access to the city;
- Social groups and self-help groups in slum areas;
- Value system and beliefs at the slum level;
- Kin system and linkages with extended family for slum dwellers;
- Coping strategies and social mobility in Kathmandu;
- Political situation and eviction events;
- Government strategy to address the slum situation in Kathmandu;
- Changes (political, cultural, social) occurring in the last decade at the city level; and
- Norms and views related to slum areas from the perspective of Kathmandu's middle class.

C | Household questionnaire

Section 1 - Identification	
Date of interview	
Household ID number	
Name of respondent	
Age of respondent	
Location of house in slum	

Section 2 - Household members information	
Household size (How many people live in the household?)	

Id	Name of the individuals living in the house	Sex	Relationship with the head of the household	Age	Educational level	Marital status	Current employment status	Occupation
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								

Relationship with the head of the household

Head - 1
 Spouse of head - 2
 Son/Daughter - 3
 Spouse of son/daughter - 4
 Grandchild - 5
 Father/Mother - 6
 Brother/Sister - 7
 Niece/Nephew - 8
 Father/Mother in law - 9
 Brother/Sister in law - 10
 Servant/Employee - 11
 Others - 12

Educational level

Not literate - 1
 Literate without formal schooling - 2
 Literate but below primary - 3
 Primary (I-V) - 4
 Middle (VI-VIII) - 5
 Secondary (IX-X) - 6
 Highersecondary (XI-XII) - 7
 Undergraduate - 8
 Graduate - 9
 Post graduate and above - 10
 Technical diploma - 11
 Other diploma - 12

Marital status

Never married - 1 Currently married - 2 Widowed - 3 Divorced/separated - 4

Current employment status

Casual or daily wages labour - 1
 Regular wage salaried - 2
 Self-employed/Own account enterprise - 3
 Unpaid helper in household enterprise - 4
 Attending educational institution - 5
 Retired person - 6
 Domestic duties only - 7
 Non working remittance recipient - 8
 Not able to work due to disability - 9
 Unemployed (available for work) - 10
 Vocational training - 11
 Others (begging, prostitution...) - 12

Section 3 - Economic status of household	
---	--

Monthly income	Rs.	Durable goods/assets (Y/N, number of items):
less than Rs 500		Electric Fan
Rs 500 - 1000		Cooler/Heater
Rs 1000 - 1500		Refrigerator
Rs 1500 - 2000		Residential Telephone
Rs 2000 - 3000		Mobile Phone
more than Rs 3000		Television
		Sewing machine
		Bicycle
		Velo Rickshaw
		Auto Rickshaw
		Push Cart
		Washing machine

Live Stock	
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Welfare benefits received by any family member

Old Age Pension - 01, Widow Pension - 02, Disabled Pension - 03, Health Insurance - 04, General Insurance - 05, Other - 06

Land tenure status

Possession Certificate or Occupancy Right / Rented / None

Housing

Type/structure of the house (permanent/non permanent structure)
 Roof made of... (Thatched - 1, Cardboard/Plastic - 2, Tin - 3, Asbestos - 4, Tile/Stone - 5, Concrete - 6, Other - 7)
 Walls made of... (Thatched - 1, Cardboard/Plastic - 2, Soil - 3, Brick - 4, Other - 5)
 Private latrine? (Yes - 1, No - 2)
 Electricity connection? (Yes - 1, No - 2)
 Piped water supply connection? (Yes - 1, No - 2)

Section 4 - Migration, caste status, religion, ethnicity

Migration status of household

Number of Years of Stay in this Town/City

• 0 to 1 year -01, • 1 to 3 years- 02, • 3 to 5 years- 03, • More than 5 years-04

Number of Years of Stay in this neighborhood/settlement

• 0 to 1 year -01, • 1 to 3 years- 02, • 3 to 5 years- 03, • More than 5 years-04

Whether migrated from

Rural Area to Urban Area: 01, Urban Area to Urban Area: 02

Migration Type

Seasonal-01, Permanent-02

Date/history of migration

(use timeline of political events/slum history)

Reasons for Migration

Unemployment-01, Low wage-02, Debt-03, Drought-04, Conflict-05, Education -06, Marriage-07, Others-08

Religion

(Hindu-01, Muslim-02, Christian-03, Sikh-04, Jainism-05, Buddhism-06, Zoroastrianism-07, Others-08)

Caste
and
rules

Ethnicity
(link to
caste
and rules)

Section 5 - Activities of household members supporting the family

ID	Name	Employment status	Place of work	Time of work	Description	Monthly earning/other benefits

Employment status (Code): Self-employed (01), Salaried (02), Regular wage ((03), Casual labour (04), Others (05)

Place of work (Code): Within the slum area- 01, Outside the slum area: within distance, Less than 0.5 kms - 02, 0.5 to 1.0 km. - 03, 1.0 km to 2.0km. - 04, 2.0km to 5.0 km. -05, more than 5.0 km-06

Time of work (Code): Whole day- 01, Half day-02, Part time-03, 3 Months in a year- 04, 6 Months in a year-05, Whole year-06

Main Reason for Unemployment of Unemployed HH Member(s)

ID	Name	Reason

Illiterate - 01, Lack of vocation skill - 02, Lack of job opportunity - 03, Disability - 04, Low wage-05, Lack of capital to invest-06, Loss of earlier job-07, Closure of unit-08, Lack of work in the enterprise (for self-employed person) - 09, Lack of work in the area (for casual labour)-10, Lay-off without pay-11, Employer harsh-12, Health hazard-13, Other - 49

Who makes decisions within the household about supporting the family?

What are the main barriers you are facing to reach opportunities?

information about opportunities/what is the main source of information?

geographical enclave/isolation

transport

limited infrastructure / road, markets, offices

access to education

access to health services

capacity to work amongst family members

limited access to formal employment

lack of social network

discrimination related to place of residence, lack of formal address

Is what your family earn or produce enough to support everyone in the household? (able to meet out the food needs, clothing, bills?)

If not, what are the resulting strategies? (buy food on credit, delay utility bill repayment, adjust the quantity/quality of food purchased, etc.)

diversification

temporary migration

alternative income sources (saving groups, extended family)

debt/indebtedness

casual labor

relying on other household members' work

relying on children's work

cutting spending on consumption and purchases

commercialization of ritual ceremonies involves making money through events such as "outdoorings" or naming ceremonies

distress sales of personal effects bring in needed cash

survival on savings

When was last time you run out of money? Why?

--

What were your expectations in terms of livelihoods when moving/coming to live in this community?

--

Section 6 - Information about kinship
--

6.1 Who is related to one another? Family members? Friends? List what you consider your extended family

6.2 Are lineage ancestors known and traceable?

Is there any evidence of the use of fictive kinship? People not related by family linkages? Old friends?

6.3 Can you identify who is part of your extended family in this slum?

6.4 How do people talk about their lineage membership?

Is it something important? Influencing life decisions?

6.5 Do you rely on your extended family? Is your extended family a source of assistance?

6.6 Would you say you take decisions accordingly to what your extended family thinks/believes?

If so, how/why? Does this apply to your decision of how to make a living?

6.7 What is it that your family would want you to do/prefer you to do? Is it important to have the same occupational status as your parents?

6.8 Do you feel under family pressure for some decisions? Education? Work? Social expenses (festival, wedding, funeral)?

6.9 Does kinship play a role in structuring the social life of the community?

6.10 Have there been any changes in the kin system? More important or less important than a decade ago? Rural/urban differences?

6.11 Is your extended family a good source for networking/getting to know more people/finding job opportunities?

Section 7 - Perceived norms and individual beliefs (agree/disagree statements)

Reason for choosing a livelihood in this community is linked to...	
4.1 Financial aspects	
4.1.1 ...the financial advantages gained through the activities (high pay or profit levels)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.2 ...the payments in kind, food provided	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.3 ...it is a convenient market or there are market opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.4 ...high reliance on cash for basic necessities makes financial aspect important	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.5 ...individuals/households seen as successful have well paid jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.6 ...the most common aspiration is to have livelihood activities with high profit/pay	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2 Security and sustainability aspects	
4.2.1 ...the regularity of work	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.2 ...diversification of activity compared to activities of other household members	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.3 ...being independent from relatives or others	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.4 ...being able to send money home/village	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.5 ...avoiding debt	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.6 ...formal work, including health insurance and social protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.7 ...it grants a higher social status to have a secured occupation rather than casual/risky/unsure activities (even with high profit)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.8 ...it brings a sense of conformity to have a secured office job, even with low profit	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2.9 ...it is a common aspiration to seek a secured and sustainable occupation	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3 Type of work, educational/skills and health	
4.3.1 ...physical work is seen as a worthy occupation by the community	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.2 ...intellectual work confers a higher social status than physical work	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.3 ...physical work is seen as the last resort choice	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.4 ...occupation is based on activities for which the person is skilled enough	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.5 ...there are people naturally gifted for particular activities who make a livelihood out of it	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.6 ...talent is not well recognised, it is difficult to express talent	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.7 ...education matters when it comes to choosing a livelihood	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.8 ...education and skills are not really valued, it is more about networks and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.9 ...health is an important aspect of the livelihoods people can access	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.10 ...health issues are often overlooked when choosing a livelihood	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.11 ...people tend to prefer flexible work schedule over regular working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.12 ...formal work is better recognised than informal work	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.13 ...informal work is seen as convenient as it is flexible and doesn't require paperwork	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.14 ...informal work is what everybody does, so it is easy to find through networks	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.15 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.16 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.17 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.18 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.19 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.20 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.21 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.22 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.23 ...street vending is perceived as ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3.24 ...harassment and eviction make street vending a difficult occupation	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4 Location	
4.4.1 ...convenience of the work place/save on transport costs	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4.2 ...occupation gives opportunity to go to other parts of the city	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4.3 ...the slum area feels like a geographical enclave, opportunities are far away	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4.4 ...people tend to opt for close-by opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4.5 ...people tend to have similar livelihoods as they face the same neighborhood constraints (location, resources, opportunities)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4.6 ...livelihood strategies are bounded to resources/opportunities in the neighborhood	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5 Absence of choice/opportunity	
4.5.1 ...it feels like there are no other opportunity/no other option	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.2 ...people tend to think there are no other options than what other households are doing	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.3 ...there is a feeling that it has always been like that	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.4 ...it used to be better	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.5 ...it is getting better	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.6 ...some persons tend to be creative and go for new livelihood strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.7 ...people prefer to conform to what others do	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.8 ...lack of opportunity is more about lack of information about opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.9 ...migration/recent migrants suffer most from lack of opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.10 ...discrimination based on place of residence is an important concern	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.11 ...discrimination based on ethnicity/origins is an important concern	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.12 ...information about opportunities flows through specific networks (which? family?)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.13 ...livelihood strategies are similar since there are no role model/success stories	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5.14 ...it feels comforting to go for the main strategies, risk is shared with other families doing the same	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6 Social and political status	
4.6.1 ...activity good for social status	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.2 ...activity enhancing social/political participation in community	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.3 ...there is a feeling of achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.6.4 ...having an occupation is seen as healthy	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.5 ...it is a duty	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.6 ...there is a necessity to occupy working members of the family	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.7 ...occupational activity as part of a broader life plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.8 ...having similar livelihood strategies reinforce sense of belonging to the community	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.9 ...having similar livelihood strategies reinforce ties between households	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6.10 ...having similar livelihood strategies lowers down the risks of being poor	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4.7 Personality and motivations</i>	
...people support their families in different ways when they have different:	
4.7.1 - prospects on social mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7.2 - high expectations/life plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7.3 - they are seen as risk takers	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7.4 - they are seen as creative	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7.5 - they are seen as ambitious	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7.6 - they are seen as smart	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7.7 - they are seen as opportunistic	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4.8 Gender</i>	
Men and women support their families in different ways, because:	
4.8.1 - they have different skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8.2 - they have different roles in the household	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8.3 - they have different roles in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8.4 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8.5 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8.6 ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4.9 Ethnicity</i>	
4.9.1 ...ethnicity is an important determinant of the occupational status	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.9.2 ...ethnicity brings discrimination about the type of occupation people can access	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.9.3 ...for some ethnic groups, it is seen as more valuable to have certain occupations (which?)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.9.4 ...some livelihoods are easier to access for certain ethnic groups (reduced transaction costs, benefits from network)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.9.5 ...people tend to believe their livelihood strategies should be the same as others from the same ethnic group	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.9.6 ...people tend to believe that it is risky to have a different livelihood strategy compared to their ethnic group	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4.10 Religion, caste</i>	
4.10.1 ...religion/caste is an important determinant of the occupational status	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.10.2 ...religion/caste brings discrimination about the type of occupation people can access	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.10.3 ...for some religion/caste groups, it is seen as more valuable to have certain occupations (which?)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.10.4 ...some livelihoods are easier to access for certain religion/caste groups (reduced transaction costs, benefits from network)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.10.5 ...people tend to believe their livelihood strategies should be the same as others from the same religion/caste	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.10.6 ...people tend to believe that it is risky to have a different livelihood strategy compared to their religion/caste group	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4.11 Generation</i>	
4.11.1 ...generation is an important determinant of the occupational status	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11.2 ...youth aspirations differ	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11.3 ...generation brings discrimination about the type of occupation people can access	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11.4 ...for some generation (old vs youth), it is seen as more valuable to have certain occupations (which?)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11.5 ...some livelihoods are easier to access for certain generations (reduced transaction costs, benefits from network)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11.6 ...people tend to believe their livelihood strategies should be the same as others from the same generation	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11.7 ...people tend to believe that it is risky to have a different livelihood strategy compared to their generation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4.12 Kinship</i>	
4.12.1 ...kinship/extended family is an important determinant of the occupational status	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.12.2 ...kinship brings discrimination about the type of occupation people can access	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.12.3 ...for some kinship/extended family, it is seen as more valuable to have certain occupations (which?)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.12.4 ...some livelihoods are easier to access for certain kinship/extended family (reduced transaction costs, benefits from network)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.12.5 ...people tend to believe their livelihood strategies should be the same as others from the same kinship/extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.12.6 ...people tend to believe that it is risky to have a different livelihood strategy compared to their kinship/extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>

D | Life stories interview guide

Key life events

- **General:** When and where was respondent born, where were parents' respondent from, parents' level of education, parents' migration patterns, parents' occupations, siblings, birth order and occupations of siblings;
- **Housing:** Housing and dwelling unit when respondent was a child, description of living conditions and comparison with current dwelling situation;
- **Childhood:** Relationship with parents and siblings, responsibilities and chores at home, food, leisure activities and health of the respondent and family; difficult periods during childhood, major events related to coping strategies and channels of support, importance of relatives, friends, NGOs support; changes in asset levels and livelihood strategies; goals, preferences and aspirations of the respondent as a child;
- **Adulthood:** Relationships before marriage, decision to get married, parents' views about marriage, dowry and land inheritance, moving out to spouse's village, relationship with in-laws; children and birth, bringing up children, support from kin and extended family; first occupation, help received from family and in-laws; conditions, constraints, profitability and risks related to work; health of respondent and family members; goals, preferences and aspirations of the respondent as an adult; and
- **Older age:** Age respondent stopped being able to work, changes in circumstances; widowhood and implications, change in status; relationship with other family members, responsibilities, support from children, role in community and status; hardship periods and retirement strategy.

Social norms and respondent's belief system

- **Social world:** Links with colleagues, friends, employers, richer/poorer households; relation with kin;
- **Network:** Social networks, clubs, church, friends and kinship networks; and
- **Events outside the home:** Insecurity, politics, relationship with local authorities, tax authorities, perception of police, government, political interventions.

Respondent's aspirations, stigma and risk taking

- **Past choices:** Examples of past decisions which affects future choices, narrative account of life choices;
- **Risk taking:** Perceptions about risks taken relating to livelihood, family decisions and poverty situations;

- **Differentiation:** Perception of being different, choosing different strategies, mainstream strategies, worthiness and views of the community and kin; and
- **Aspirations and goals:** Life events perceived as achievements, changing patterns in aspirations and goals.

E | Additional tables and figures

Table E.1 Thapathali population age structure

Age groups (%)	Thapathali	Nepal	Urban areas	Rural areas	Kathmandu
0-5	8.5	9.7	7.2	10.2	6.4
6-10	11.0	12.1	9.5	12.6	7.9
11-15	15.3	13.1	11.2	13.5	9.5
16-25	21.6	20.6	23.0	19.3	24.9
26-35	17.8	14.4	18.2	13.6	20.9
36-45	14.4	11.3	12.9	10.9	13.7
46-55	6.8	8.2	8.1	8.2	8.0
56-65	3.0	6.0	5.1	6.7	4.4
65+	1.7	4.6	4.8	5.0	4.3

Source: NPHC (CBS 2011)

Table E.2 Household size and structure

Household size	%
1	2
2	6
3-4	28
5	40
6-8	22
9+	2
Relationship to household head	%
Head	21.2
Spouse of head	17.4
Son/Daughter	53.0
Spouse of son/daughter	0.9
Grandchild	1.7
Father/Mother	3.0
Brother/Sister	2.1

Table E.3 Caste/ethnic groups¹²⁴

Caste/ethnic group	%
<i>Brahmin</i>	6.8
Unknown	2.1
Prasad/Dhungana	2.1
Pokhrel	2.5
<i>Chhetri</i>	30.9
Unknown	4.7
Magar/Thakuri	15.7
Thapa/Thakuri	3.0
Shah/Thakuri	2.5
Khadka	2.1
Pahari	2.1
Sanyasi/Giri	0.9
<i>Newar</i>	11.4
Unknown	3.0
Shrestha	4.7
Nagarkoti	1.7
Maharjan	2.1
<i>Hill/Mountain Janajati</i>	22.0
Rai	8.5
Limbu	1.3
Chepang	2.5
Gurung	0.9
Tamang	8.9
<i>Terai Janajati</i>	4.2
Sunar/Vaisya	0.9
Yadav/Vaisya	2.1
Chaudhary/Tharu	1.3
<i>Dalit</i>	15.3
Unknown	4.2
B. K.	7.2
Pariyar	3.8
<i>Lama</i>	9.3

¹²⁴ Percentages do not add up to 100% as some households chose not to disclose their caste group or religious affiliation.

Table E.4 Education level (percentage of total sample, Thapathali community)

Education	%
Not literate	3.8
Literate without formal schooling	26.3
Below primary	1.7
Primary (I-V)	4.7
Middle (VI-VIII)	26.3
Secondary (IX-X)	18.2
Higher secondary (XI-XII)	11.9
Undergraduate	5.5
Graduate	1.7

Table E.5 National distribution of migrant population by origin of migration

Distribution of migrant population	Migrated from urban areas	Migrated from rural areas	Migrated from outside Nepal
Living in urban areas	15.9	73.5	10.6
Living in rural areas	3.6	84.0	12.3
Living in Kathmandu	22.4	72.0	5.5

Source: NPHC (CBS 2011)

Table E.6 Monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified equivalence scale, Thapathali households)

Monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)	% household
NPR <2300 – First and Second national quintiles	24
NPR 2300-4600 – Third and Fourth national quintiles	52
NPR 4601-6900 – Fourth national quintile	14
NPR >6900 – Fifth national quintile	10

Table E.7 Monthly per capita income by quintile (national averages)

Quintile	Monthly per capita income (NPR)	Share of income (%)	Cumulative share (%)
Poorest	708	4.1	4.1
Second	1358	7.8	11.9
Third	2111	12.2	24.1
Fourth	3428	19.7	43.8
Richest	9755	56.2	100.0
Nepal	3472	100.0	100.0

Source: NPHC (CBS 2011)

Table E.8 Average monthly per capita income by employment status (Thapathali community)

Employment status	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
Casual or daily wage labour	3841
Self-employed	4926
Regular wage salaried	3497

Table E.9 Average monthly per capita income by household earning members ratio (Thapathali community)

Ratio of household members working/household members of working age	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
0.25	2409
0.5	3120
0.75	5594
1	3624

Table E.10 Average monthly per capita income by perception of hardship (Thapathali community)

Whether household earnings are deemed sufficient to support everyone in the family	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
Enough	4709
Manageable	3849
Not enough	2759
Several hardship periods	1567

Reason for last period of hardship	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
Sickness of family member	3741
Festival times	2526
Baby born	2628
Shifting to new job/transition	2580
Eviction	4064
No work in sector	2338

Table E.11 Average monthly per capita income by type of coping strategy (in NPR)

Strategy during last period of hardship	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
Cutting spending on consumption	3602
Distress sales of personal effects and assets	3750
Survival on savings	4261
Relying on more casual labour hours	3185
Relying on children's work	2857
Loan from family	4088
Loan from friends in Thapathali	3107
Loan from friends outside Thapathali	2475
Children sent to village	4625

Table E.12 Relationship to extended family, ranked by average monthly per capita income (in NPR)

Whether household still has family living in rural areas	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
Extended family only	3348
Extended and nuclear family members	4352
Nuclear family only	1923
No family in rural areas	2648

Frequency of visit to family in rural areas	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
Never	2556
Every two/three years	4175
For festival times/every year	5160
Last visit happened in the past six months	3441

Table E.13 Average monthly per capita income by financial support types (Thapathali community)

Whether household is sending money back home or receiving money	Average monthly income in NPR (per capita, OECD-modified scale)
Sending money	3166
Receiving money	5662
None	3305

Figure E.14 Length of stay in Kathmandu since rural migration (percentage of total households, Thapathali community)

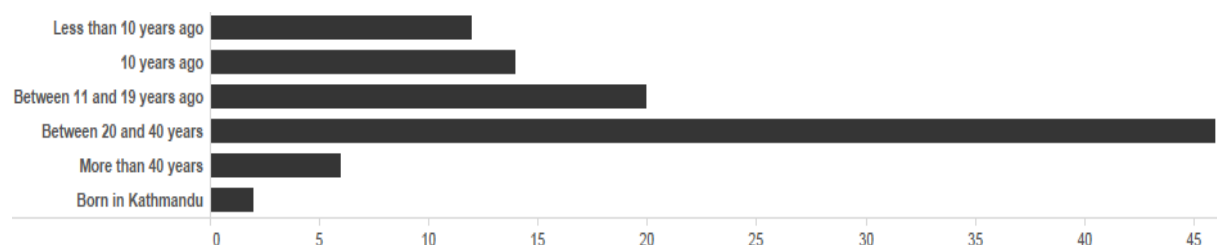


Figure E.15 Length of stay in Thapathali (percentage of total households, Thapathali community)

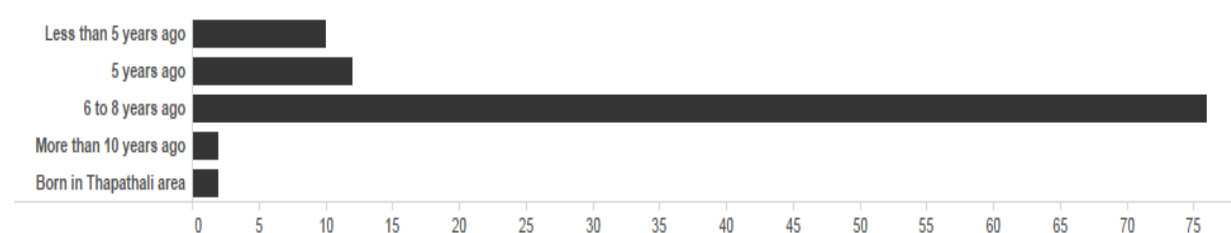


Figure E.16 Length of stay in a rented room before moving to Thapathali (percentage of total households, Thapathali community)

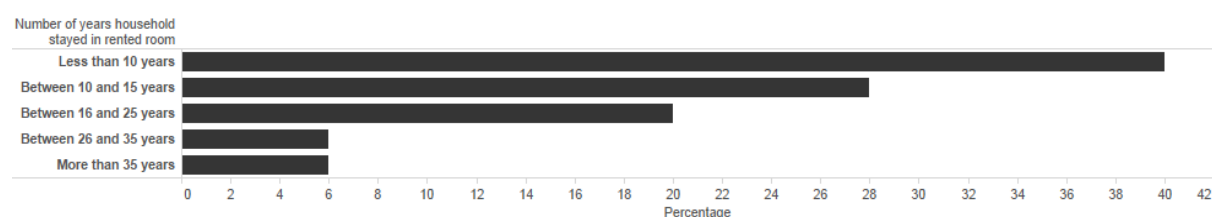


Figure E.17 Reasons for migration to Thapathali (percentage of total households, Thapathali community)

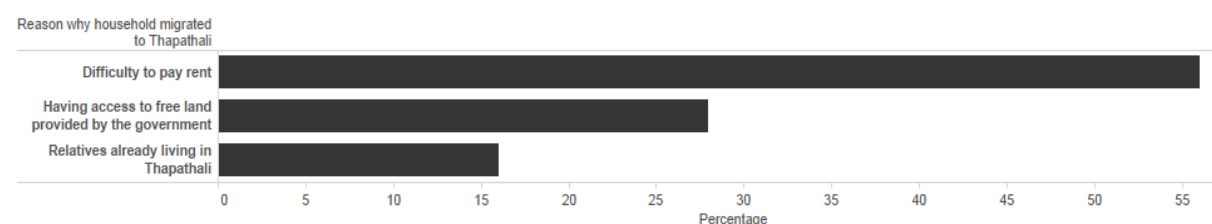


Figure E.18 Ways in which household identified Thapathali as an alternative housing solution (percentage of total households, Thapathali community)

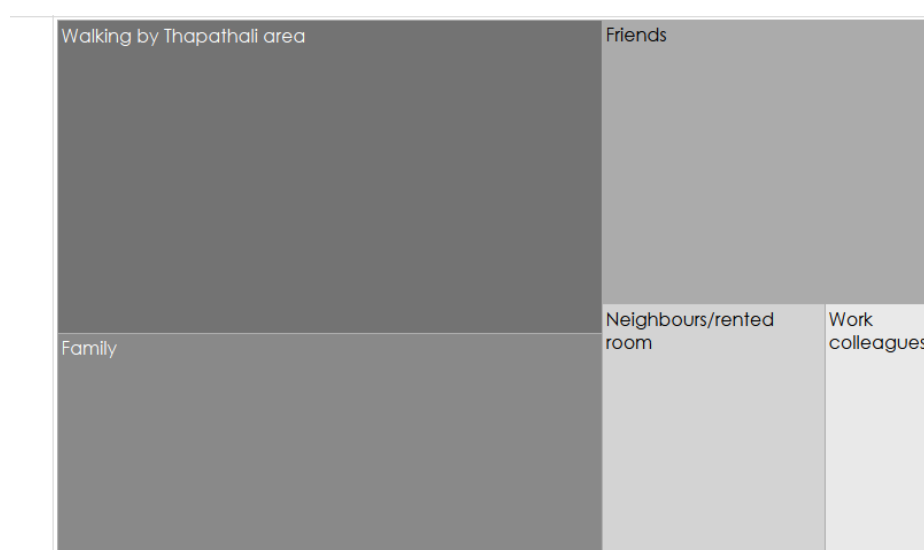


Table E.19 Distribution of regular and casual/ daily wage earners by sector (NLSS 2010/11)

	Mining	Manufacturing	Electricity, gas and water	Construction	Trade	Transport	Finance	Personal service
Male	1.1	16.6	2.0	40.3	6.7	10.1	2.8	20.4
Female	0.7	18.8	1.2	25.4	4.4	1.4	5.7	42.4
Urban	0.8	21.0	1.6	14.2	10.8	9.1	7.8	34.7
Rural	1.1	15.4	1.9	46.5	4.2	7.8	1.7	21.5
Kathmandu	0.7	21.5	1.3	7.9	12.8	8.9	11.8	35.2
Poorest	1.1	15.6	1.9	61.0	2.8	6.6	0.2	10.8
Second quintile	1.5	15.7	1.1	53.4	4.2	7.5	0.6	16.2
Third quintile	1.0	20.6	1.9	44.1	5.1	8.8	0.5	17.9
Fourth quintile	0.9	18.9	1.9	33.0	7.8	9.1	2.4	25.9
Richest	0.6	15.0	2.3	8.9	9.1	8.4	10.4	45.3
Median daily wage – male (non-agriculture sector)								
250								
Median daily wage – female (non-agriculture sector)								
150								
Median daily wage – urban areas (non-agriculture sector)								
250								
Median daily wage – rural areas (non-agriculture sector)								
200								
Median daily wage – Kathmandu (non-agriculture sector)								
300								

Source: NLSS (2010/11)

Table E.20 Distribution of self-employed earners by sector (NLSS 2010/11)

	Annual net revenue (mean NRs)	Manufacturing	Trade	Services	Other	1 worker	2 – 9 workers	10+ workers
Urban	281 861	24.7	44.5	23.3	7.5	34.5	49.4	16.1
Rural	69 585	39.4	33.0	14.1	13.4	32.3	50.5	17.2
Kathmandu	332 332	24.0	42.6	28.6	4.7	32.4	55.0	12.7
Poorest	29 892	50.4	24.3	9.9	15.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Second quintile	32 063	35.6	32.9	14.6	17.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Third quintile	48 168	38.7	35.8	14.1	11.4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fourth quintile	148 602	40.3	33.4	14.5	11.8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Richest	229 164	25.2	43.5	22.7	8.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: NLSS (2010/11)

Table E.21 Employment situations of earning members (percentage of total earning members, Thapathali community)

Employment description	% earning members engaged in this activity	Average monthly income - main earner	Average length - main earner	How earning member found out about opportunity - main earner	Average monthly income - secondary earner	Average length - secondary earner	How earning member found out about opportunity - secondary earner	Average monthly income - tertiary earner	Average length - tertiary earner	How earning member found out about job opportunity - tertiary earner
Casual work (all)	35.9	5260	Past twelve years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through friends in Thapathali	2680	Past seven years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through friends in Thapathali	1000	Past two years	Through friends in Thapathali
Unskilled construction work	32.6	4523	Past eight years	Through friends in Thapathali	2541	Past seven years	Through friends in Thapathali	1000	Past two years	Through friends in Thapathali
Skilled construction work	3.4	13000	Past fourteen years	Through friends in Kathmandu	6000	Past six months	Through friends in Kathmandu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Self-employed (all)	23.6	6777	Past twelve years	Through friends in Kathmandu	4100	Past nine years	Through friends in Thapathali / Through friends in Kathmandu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Handicraft (home-based)	7.8	5166	Past six years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through family from village	5500	Past twelve years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through neighbours / rented room	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Shop owner (tea shop, meat shop, sewing shop)	10.1	7187	Past four years	Through friends in Kathmandu	3000	Past two years	Through friends in Thapathali	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Street vending (food, clothes, handicraft)	4.5	4500	Past seven years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through friends in village	1000	Past five years	Through friends in Thapathali	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Retailing	1.1	20000	Always, first job when got to Kathmandu	Through friends in Kathmandu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Regular wage work (all)	40.5	6875	Past six years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through family in Kathmandu	2958	Past two years	Through friends in Thapathali/ Through work colleagues	3833	Past five years	Through friends in Thapathali/ Through work colleagues
Factory worker	4.5	6750	Past eight years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through neighbours/ rented room	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Transport worker (driver, ticker counter)	1.1	4000	Past five years	Through friends in Kathmandu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Helper (shop, office)	12.3	10333	Past three years	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through family in Kathmandu	3875	Past six months	Through friends in Kathmandu / Through distant relatives in Kathmandu	5250	Past four years	Through friends in Thapathali
Domestic work	6.7	4500	Past three years	Through friends in Thapathali/ Through friends in Kathmandu	2500	Past four years	Through work colleagues	1000	Past five years	Through work colleagues
Cooking, catering activities	2.2	7000	Past ten years	Through work colleagues	3000	Past five years	Through distant relatives in Kathmandu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Teacher / Community centre worker	2.3	3000	Past six months	Through friends in Thapathali	2000	Past six months	Through friends in Thapathali	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
NGO worker	1.2	11000	Past five years	Through work colleagues	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Security guard, police officer	4.4	6625	Past year	Through family in Kathmandu / Through friends in Kathmandu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Mechanics, plumber	5.6	6333	Past five years	Through family in Kathmandu / Through work colleagues	2500	Past two years	Through family in Kathmandu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Table E.22 Distance from place of work (earning members, Thapathali community)

Employment description	Average distance from place of work – main earner	Average distance from place of work – secondary earner	Average distance from place of work – tertiary earner
Casual work (all)	Not fixed	Not fixed	Not fixed
Unskilled construction work	Not fixed	Not fixed	Not fixed
Skilled construction work	Not fixed	Not fixed	n.a.
Self-employed (all)	Within slum area/ Not fixed	Within slum area/ Not fixed	n.a.
Handicraft (home-based)	Within slum area	Within slum area	n.a.
Shop owner (tea shop, meat shop, sewing shop)	Within slum area/ or 2km to 5km	Within slum area	n.a.
Street vending (food, clothes, handicraft)	Not fixed	Not fixed	n.a.
Retailing	Not fixed	n.a.	n.a.
Regular wage work (all)	1 km to 5km	1 km to 5km	1 km to 2km
Factory worker	1 km to 2km	n.a.	n.a.
Transport worker (driver, ticker counter)	Not fixed	n.a.	n.a.
Helper (shop, office)	1 km to 2km	2km to 5km	1 km to 5km
Domestic work	1 km to 5km	1 km to 2km	1 km to 2km
Cooking, catering activities	Not fixed	2km to 5km	n.a.
Teacher / Community centre worker	Within slum area	Within slum area	n.a.
NGO worker	1 km to 2km	n.a.	n.a.
Security guard, police officer	3km to 7km	n.a.	n.a.
Mechanics, plumber	Not fixed	Not fixed	n.a.

Table E.23 Periods of hardship and coping strategies

Employment description	Whether what household earns is enough to support everyone in the household	Last period of hardship	Reason for last period of hardship	Coping strategy during last period of hardship
Casual work (all)	Enough (21.4), Manageable (21.5), Not enough (57.1), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Eviction/ No work in sector/ Festival times	Loan from friends in Thapathali/ Relying on more casual labour hours/ Loan from family
Unskilled construction work	Enough (25.0), Manageable (16.7), Not enough (58.3), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Eviction/ No work in sector/ Festival times	Relying on more casual labour hours/ Loan from friends in Thapathali/ Loan from family
Skilled construction work	Enough (0.0), Manageable (50.0), Not enough (50.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Sickness of one family member	Loan from friends in Thapathali
Self-employed (all)	Enough (27.7), Manageable (27.7), Not enough (36.4), Several hardship periods (9.2)	6 months ago	Eviction/ Sickness of one family member	Loan from friends outside Thapathali/ Loan from family/ Survival on savings
Handicraft (home-based)	Enough (20.0), Manageable (40.0), Not enough (40.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Eviction/ Sickness of one family member	Loan from family
Shop owner (tea shop, meat shop, sewing shop)	Enough (25.0), Manageable (25.0), Not enough (25.0), Several hardship periods (25.0)	6 months ago	Eviction/ Shifting to new job/transition	Relying on more casual labour hours/ Loan from friends outside Thapathali
Street vending (food, clothes, handicraft)	Enough (0.0), Manageable (0.0), Not enough (100.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	More than 2 years ago	Sickness of one family member	Loan from friends outside Thapathali
Retailing	Enough (100.0), Manageable (0.0), Not enough (0.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Festival times	Survival on savings

Regular wage work (all)	Enough (37.5), Manageable (25.0), Not enough (37.5), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago/ More than 2 years ago	Sickness of one family member/ Eviction/ Baby born	Loan from family/ Loan from friends in Thapathali
Factory worker	Enough (50.0), Manageable (25.0), Not enough (25.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Festival times/ Sickness of one family member	Relying on children's work/ or Children sent to village/ Loan from family
Transport worker (driver, ticker counter)	Enough (100.0), Manageable (0.0), Not enough (0.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	More than 2 years ago	Sickness of one family member	Loan from family
Helper (shop, office)	Enough (50.0), Manageable (50.0), Not enough (0.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	1 year ago	Sickness of one family member	Loan from family
Domestic work	Enough (0.0), Manageable (0.0), Not enough (100.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Eviction	Relying on more casual labour hours
Cooking, catering activities	Enough (100.0), Manageable (0.0), Not enough (0.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	2 months ago	Sickness of one family member	Loan from family
Teacher / Community centre worker	Enough (50.0), Manageable (0.0), Not enough (50.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	2 months ago	Sickness of one family member	Loan from family/ Loan from friends in Thapathali
NGO worker	Enough (0.0), Manageable (100.0), Not enough (0.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	6 months ago	Eviction	Loan from family
Security guard, police officer	Enough (0.0), Manageable (0.0), Not enough (100.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	Less than 2 months ago	Sickness of one family member/ Baby born	Loan from family
Mechanics, plumber	Enough (0.0), Manageable (25.0), Not enough (75.0), Several hardship periods (0.0)	More than 2 years ago	Sickness of one family member/ No work in sector	Loan from friends in Thapathali

Figure E.24 Objective characteristics and financial aspects of making a living¹²⁵

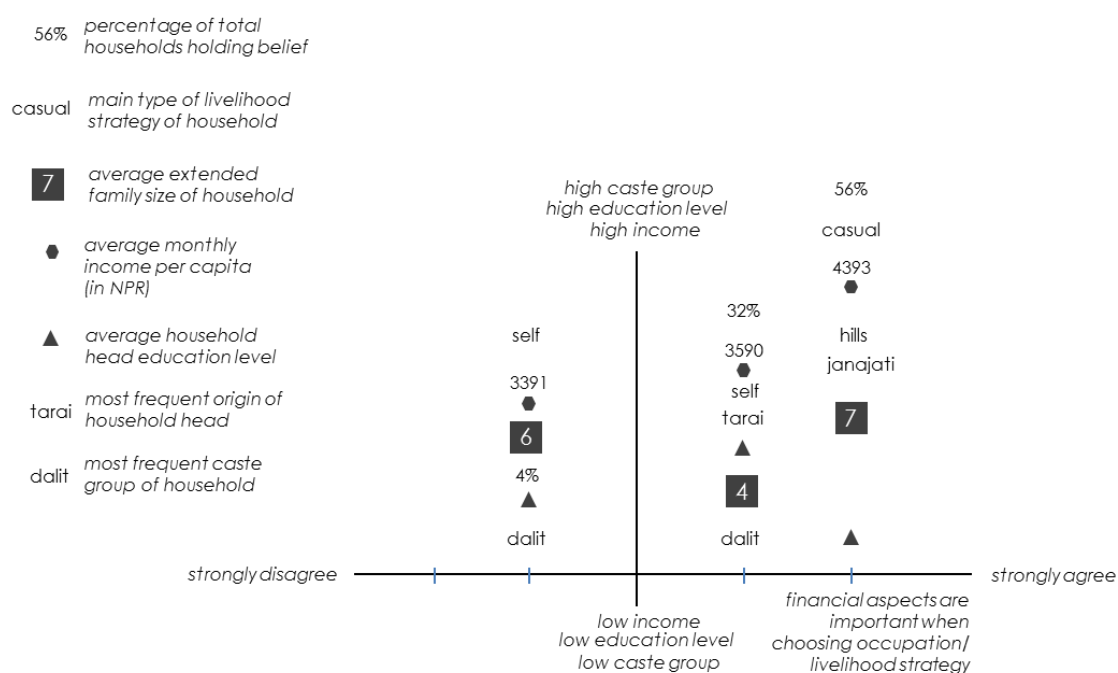
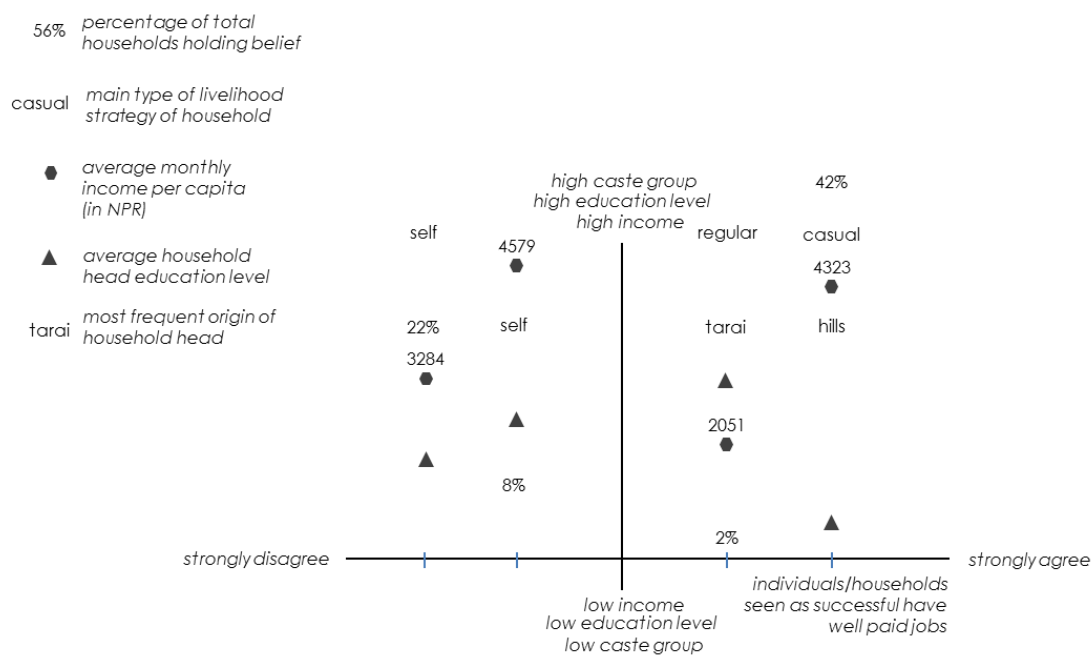


Figure E.25 Objective characteristics and money/ success aspects of making a living



¹²⁵ Compiled using perception data from household survey. Percentages do not add up to 100% as the "Do not know" category is not presented on the graphs. The Likert scale is represented on the horizontal axis, from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree", each marker on the axis representing one step on the scale. The vertical axis encompasses several dimensions and therefore several scales; each dimension (e.g. percentage of total households holding belief) is represented in proportion to the distance between each observation within this dimension.

Figure E.26 Objective characteristics and security and sustainability aspects of making a living

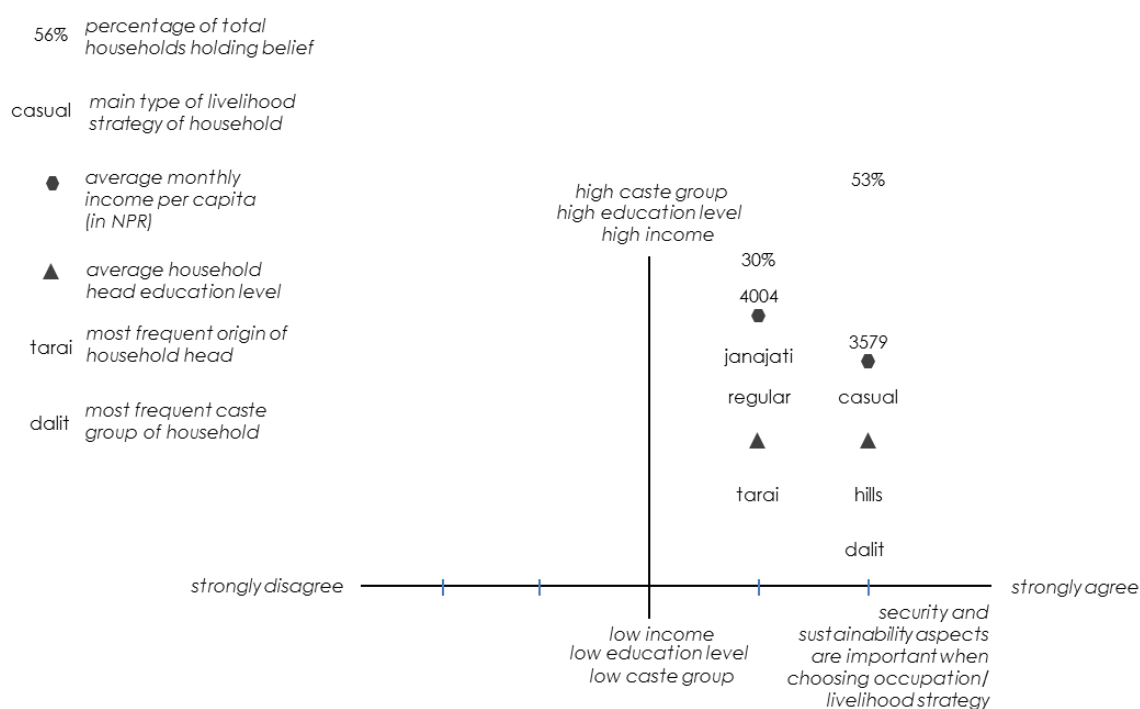


Figure E.27 Objective characteristics and education/ skills aspects of making a living

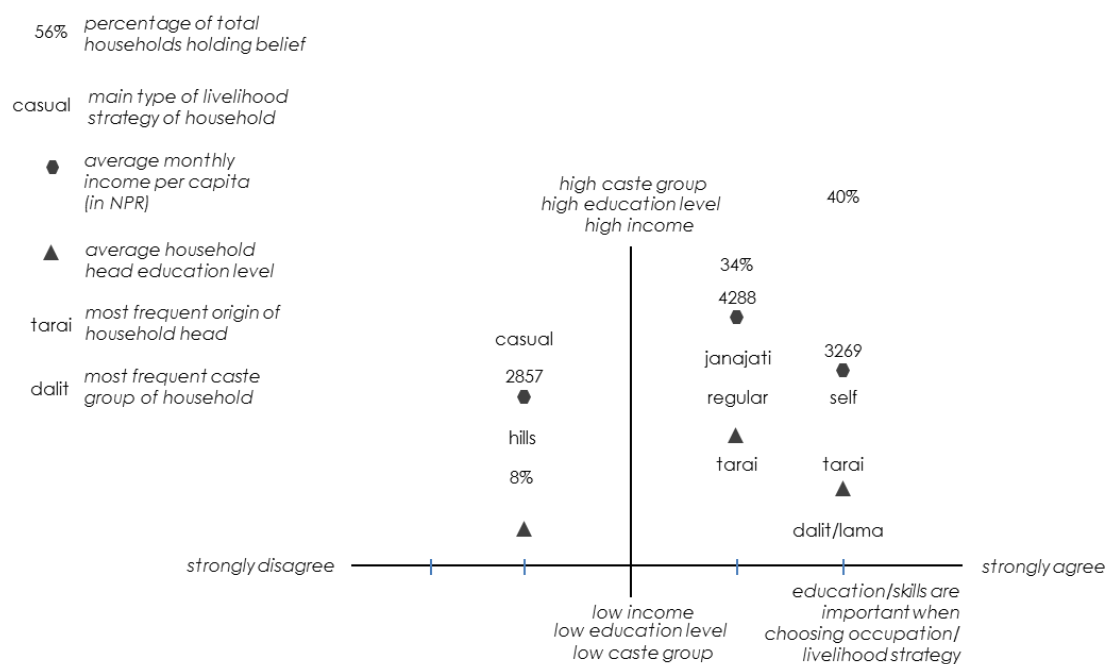


Figure E.28 Objective characteristics and physical work aspects of making a living

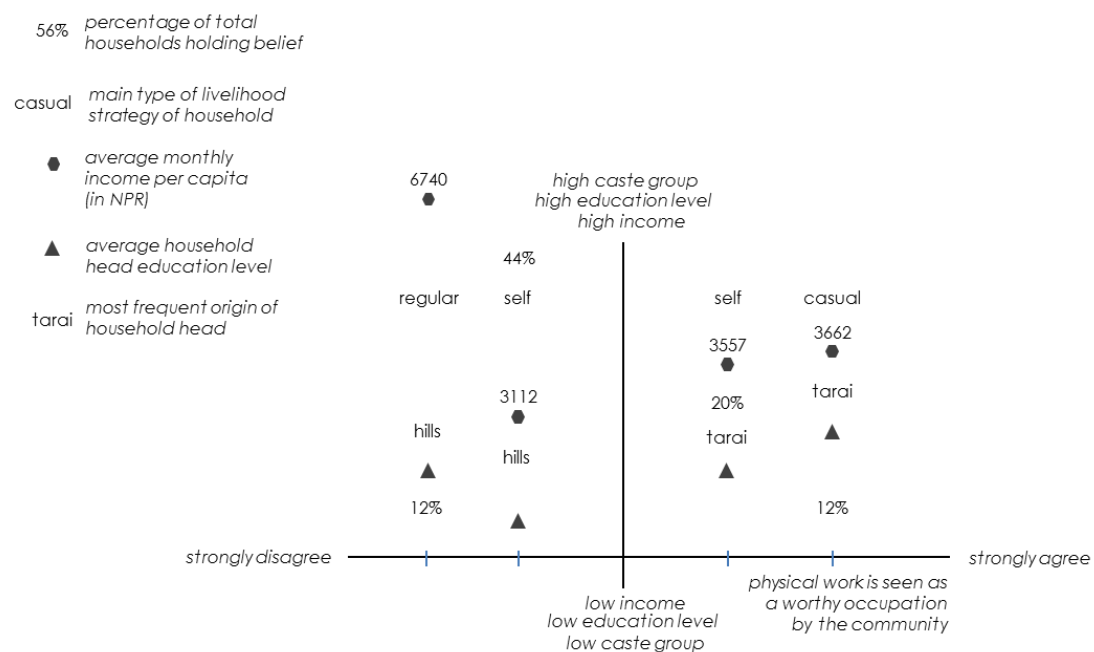


Figure E.29 Objective characteristics and geographical location aspects of making a living

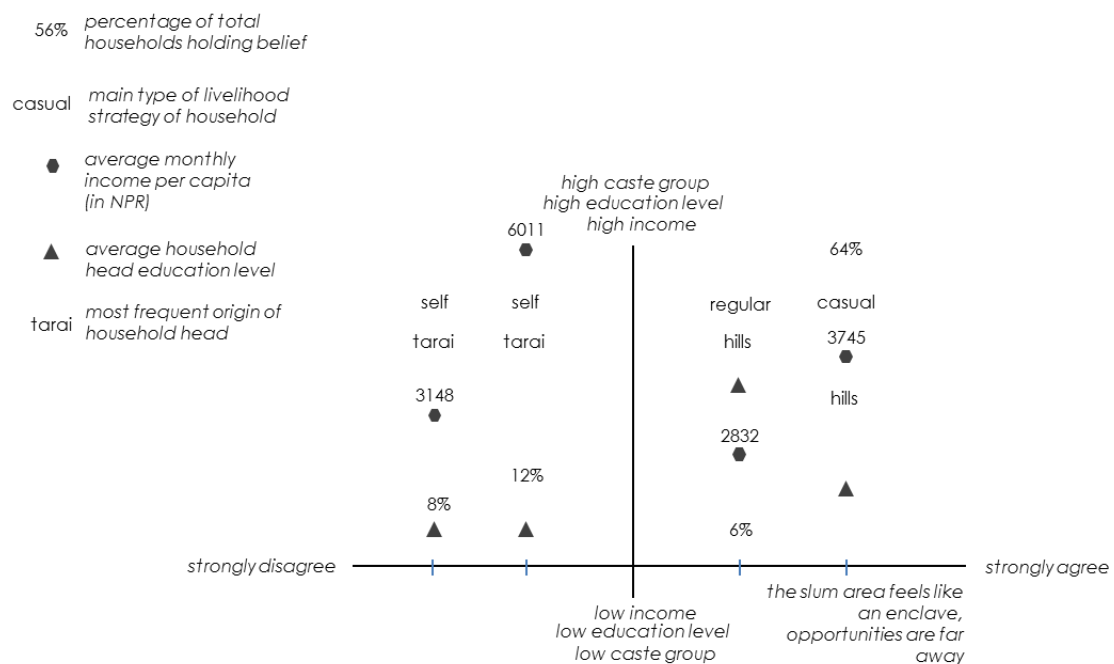


Figure E.30 Objective characteristics and absence of choice aspects of making a living

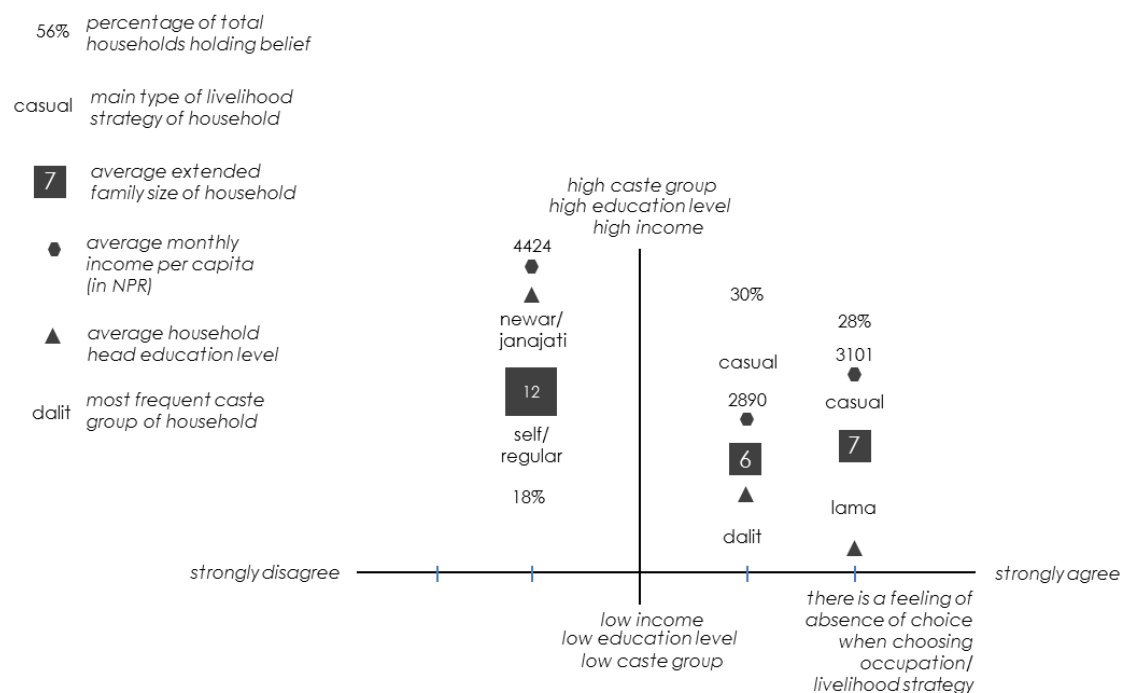


Figure E.31 Objective characteristics and imitative strategies aspects of making a living

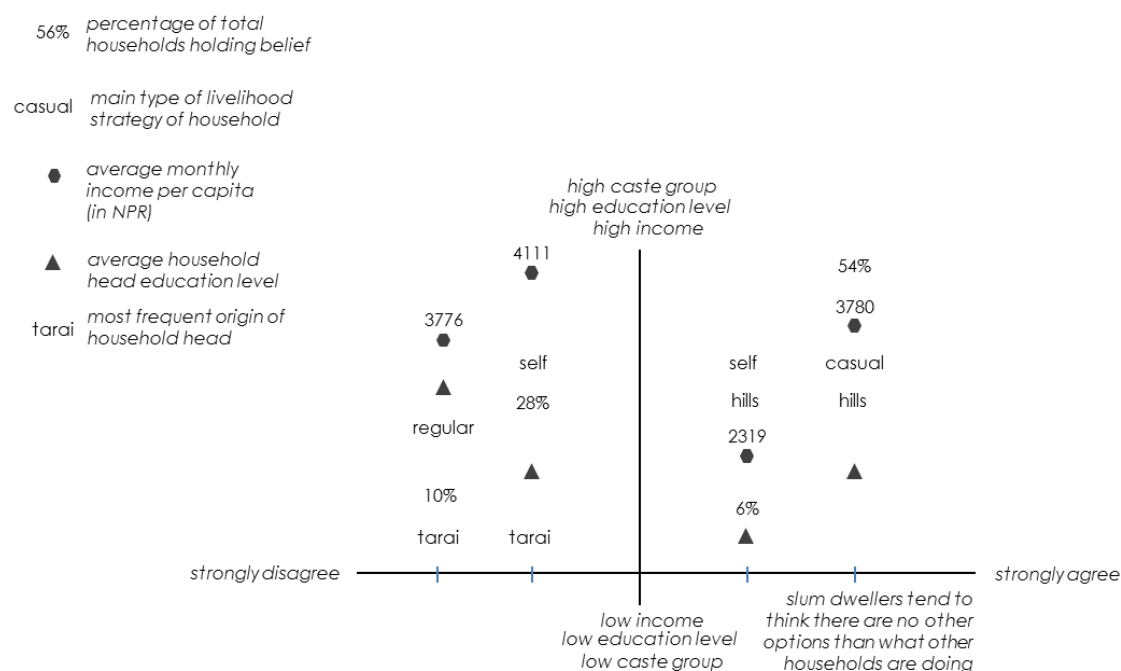


Figure E.32 Objective characteristics and membership norms aspects of making a living

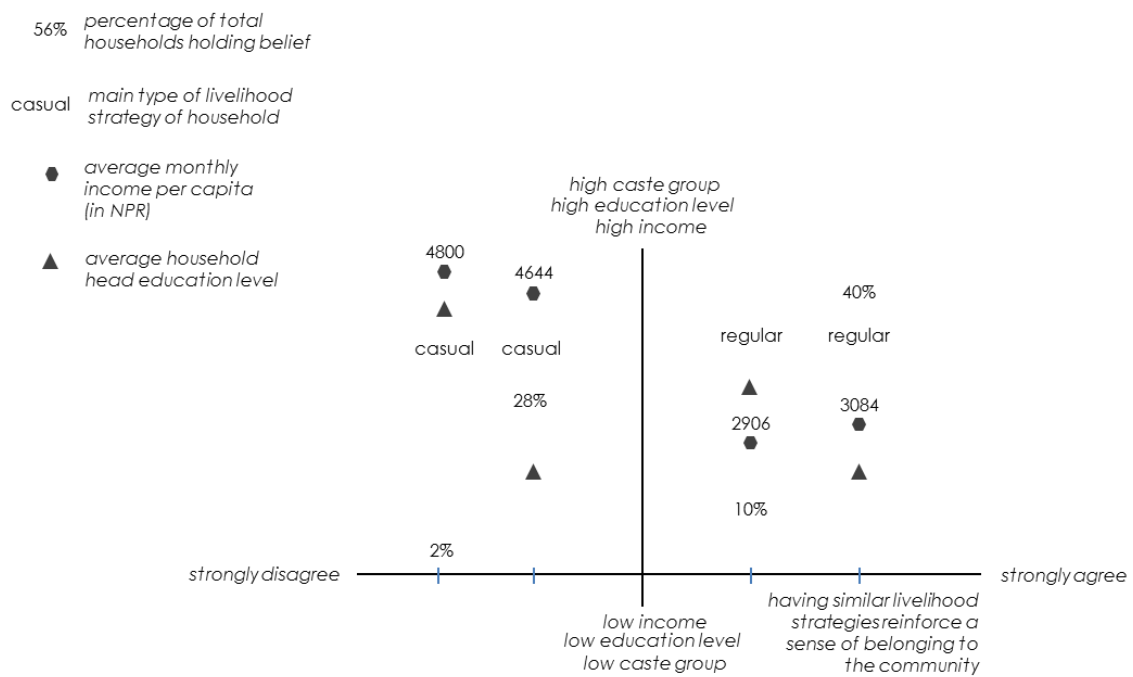


Figure E.33 Objective characteristics and religious/ethnic aspects of making a living

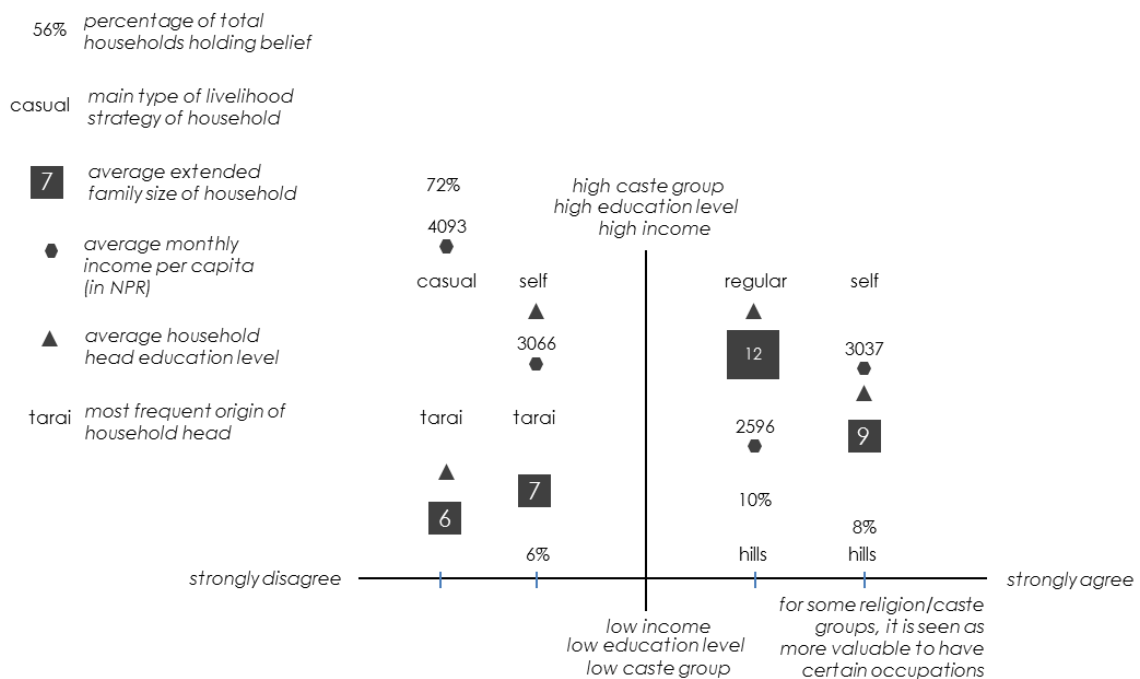


Figure E.34 Objective characteristics and kinship influence aspects of making a living

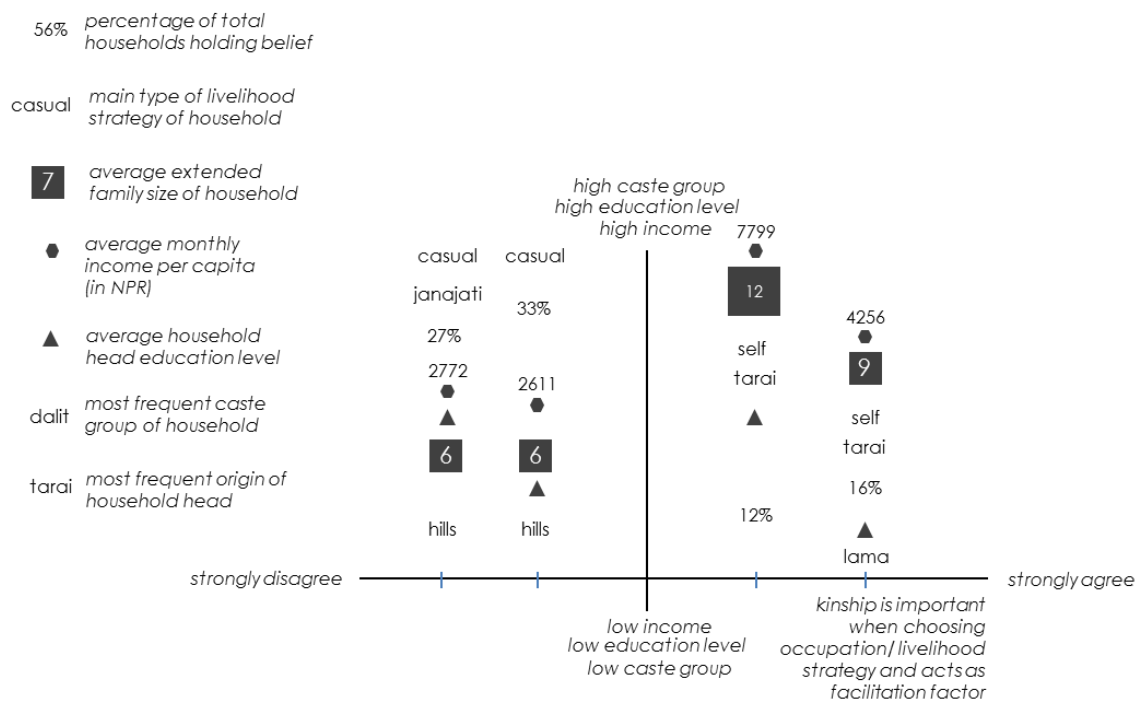


Figure E.35 Objective characteristics and job competition aspects of making a living

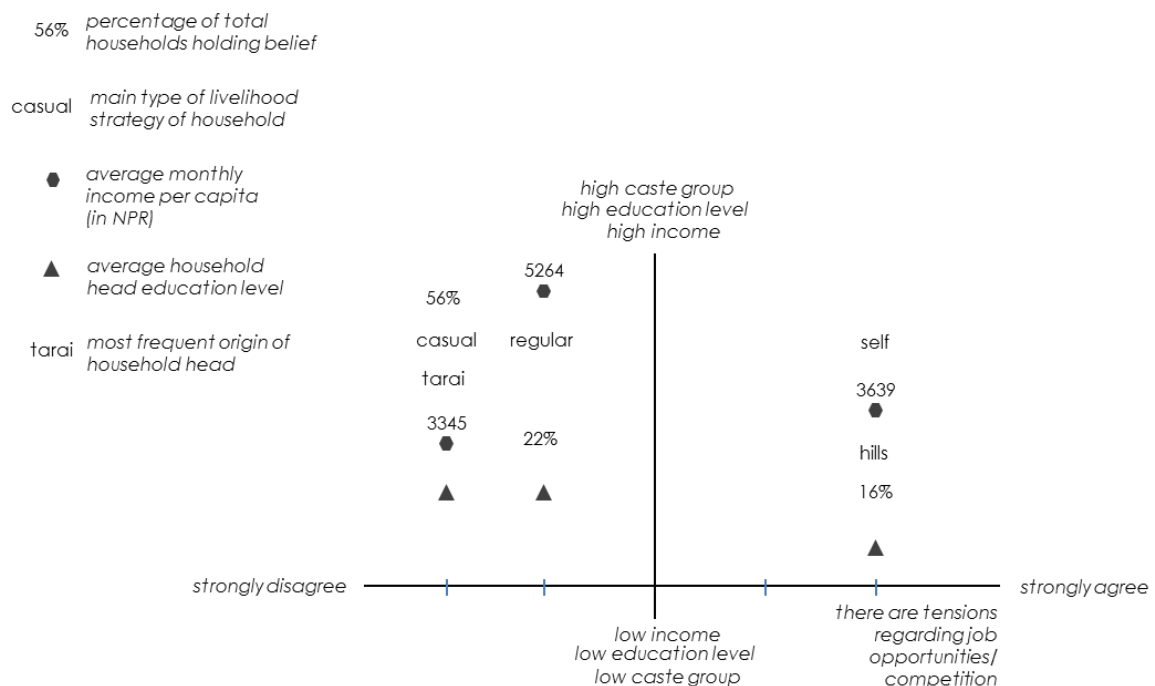


Figure E.36 Objective characteristics and social classes/ poverty differences aspects of making a living

